Have dream
shout a woman
Went away broken head
dry
not good
(c)hurch heavy

P 76
James Brown came

are we? are
many? how
Good Uthman

Gossa came

Ostenhaus

were many
not convinced
remained

Ending abrupt
pale few men
live - many
James came
smile at each other
James' smile working must be prejudiced earlier to be effective.
THE PORT CHICAGO MUTINY

Written by

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. A RAILROAD SIDING - DAY

A freight car is slowly pulling in. RAILROAD POLICE are waiting for it to stop.

NARRATOR
This story is based on events that happened in the United States of America in 1944. Some names have been changed. Some characters have been invented. The story is true.

As the train stops, VAGRANTS who have been riding in the boxcars leap out and start running away. The railroad police chase after them, savagely swinging their clubs.

LAMAR
A young black man, he tries to get away, but is collared by the police. He struggles until subdued by vicious cracks of a club.

2 INT. A SOUTHERN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

It is graduation day and the all-black graduating class is listening to an oration delivered by one of the graduating students - JAMES.

JAMES
Four enemy planes. Not one, not two ... four Japanese fighter planes. Dorie Miller stood on the burning deck of the West Virginia that day at Pearl Harbor and found himself a machine gun and he shot down all four of those planes.
3 INT. A JAIL - DAY

A GUARD opens a cell door to reveal Lamar huddled against the wall of a dark, windowless cell. His face is bruised from his beating. The guard motions to him and he gets to his feet and stumbles out.

4 INT. THE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

James finishing his speech.

JAMES
Dorie Miller was not trained to fight. He was trained to be a steward, a mess attendant, which was all a Negro could be in the United States Navy. But when the time came, Dorie Miller showed what a Negro was capable of. He proved himself a hero. He proved a man is still a man! Regardless of the color of his skin! And that’s what we’re fighting for ... to show our country that the Negro is a man like any other man!

Students stand and applaud. James nods. The applause continues.

5 INT. A COURTROOM - DAY

Lamar stands before a JUDGE. His manner is contrite, his sincerity convincing even if totally phony. He is conning the judge.

LAMAR
I was coming here to enlist.

JUDGE
Enlist?

LAMAR
Yes, sir. Didn't have the money for no other way to come, so I hopped that there freight train.

JUDGE
Enlist in what?

Lamar's eye is caught by someone in the courtroom.

LAMAR'S POV - A NAVY SEAMAN

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

sitting among civilians.

LAMAR

piously.

LAMAR

The United States Navy, Judge. So's I could join up in the war.

JUDGE

You were coming here to enlist in the Navy?

LAMAR

Yes, sir. To serve my country.

JUDGE

Well, I got to give you credit for fast thinking, boy. Enlist in the Navy, that's a good one, I like that. So I'm going to give you the choice. Thirty days on the chain gang or the U.S. Navy. Take your pick.

There is the FLASH of a camera.

EXT. A RECRUITING AREA - DAY

as a row of young black Navy recruits are photographed in uniform. All are smiling except Lamar. An O.C. VOICE is heard.

VOICE

Smile, sailor!

Lamar offers a weak, reluctant, insincere smile. There is another camera FLASH.

EXT. A SMALL FRAME HOUSE - DAY

Standing in front of the house, posed for a picture is James in a Navy uniform, flanked by his proud parents. Another VOICE is heard O.C.
VOICE
Smile!

James puts his arms around his parents and gives a big, happy, sincere smile. The camera FLASHES, turning the screen all to white.

EXT. A LOADING DOCK - PORT CHICAGO - NIGHT

And the white screen slowly resolves itself into an area lit with great arc lights. Black Navy SEAMEN are loading a Liberty ship with ammunition, supervised by white Navy OFFICERS. Some of the seamen stop work to look up as two trucks roll by, filled with other black SAILORS.

OFFICER
(sharply)
Okay, that's enough looking. Let's keep this ammo rolling. There's a war on.

The men get back to work.

THE BACK OF A TRUCK

as the men look back curiously at the working sailors. Among the new arrivals are James and Lamar.

WENDELL
What they loadin' over there?

JAMES
Bombs. For the Pacific.

ODELL
Man, I thought we was in the Navy to shoot them bombs, not load them.

LAMAR
Where you from, stupid? You think they giving guns to the colored?

JAMES
It's still part of the war effort.

LAMAR
Yeah. The part that goes over the fence last.

The trucks roll up and park in front of a barracks. The men climb wearily out, carrying their gear, and stumble into the (CONTINUED)
INT. THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

The camera travelling down the room as the sailors, supervised by a black petty officer, pick out bunks and start unloading their gear. There is grumbling and apprehension about this new assignment. Most thought they would be put on a ship. The camera stops at James and Lamar, who have bunks next to each other. Lamar falls flat on the bed, not bothering to unpack. James cheerfully busies himself unpacking, whistling as he works.

Lamar
(watching him)
You all gung-ho, ain't you, boy?

James
(mildly)
James.

Lamar
James. Got to call you James, right?

James
Or Jim.

Lamar
No, I figure you for a James. You ain't no Jim, you a right and proper James. Gung-ho James. Pride of the Navy.

James
(taking no offense)
And you're--?

Lamar

James
(smiles)
Ain't going to do you much good cursing around here. Just get you more work detail.

Lamar
Well, there's work and there's work. You got to find what suits your personality, right? Now you, I figure it don't matter what they give you to do. You got a gratitude attitude. Take whatever they lay on you, smile right through it.

(MORE)
LAMAR (cont'd)
(acting servile)
Yes, suh, Massa, load it on me--

JAMES
Okay, Lamar--

LAMAR
Ain't no burden heavy enough, Massa. Long as it's part of the war effort--

JAMES
(pleasantly)
You want to stop now or you want to stop when you got no more teeth?

Lamar just looks at him, unperturbed.

LAMAR
You ever jump a freight, James? No, you ain't the type. Anyways, you hop into a boxcar and there's some other types there. They look you over and they're all figuring the same thing. How far can they push you? And you're thinking the same about them.

JAMES
Maybe they're just thinking here's somebody else in the same fix as us.

LAMAR
I see you ain't rode the rails.

JAMES
No, I haven't. But this ain't no boxcar, neither. I ain't looking to push you and you got no need trying to push me. Besides, it won't do you no good.

LAMAR
(smiles)
Just trying to figure you out, James.

JAMES
Well, now you figured.

He resumes his unpacking. The Petty Officer yells from the doorway.

PETTY OFFICER
Lights out in two minutes! You got two minutes!

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

James takes off his shoes and socks, slips off his pants and shirt, folds them up and slides into bed. Lamar doesn't move.

JAMES
You ain't getting undressed?

LAMAR
What for? Just got to get dressed again.

James looks at him quizzically. The lights go out. James tries to get comfortable, closes his eyes. Lamar lies there with his eyes open.

EXT. THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

They are all dark. But in the distance, the loading area is still brightly lit and the seamen are still working. The door to the barracks opens and Lamar slips out. He looks carefully around and then heads towards the loading area.

EXT. THE LOADING AREA - NIGHT

as Lamar approaches. Everyone is busy working; no one pays any attention to him.

LAMAR'S POV - THE WORK

Bombs being loaded off a barge, placed in a net, which a winch operator swings over to the hold of a ship and lowers inside.

LAMAR
as he watches, a voice barks out from behind him.

OFFICER
What you doing here, sailor?

Lamar turns, confronted by an OFFICER.

LAMAR
Just watching, sir.
(sincerely)
Getting a head start on how it's done.
OFFICER
You one of the new boys?

LAMAR
Yes, sir.

OFFICER
Well, get your ass back where it belongs.

LAMAR
Yes, sir. On the double, sir.

He salutes and starts back to the barracks, looking back once more.

LAMAR'S POV - THE WINCH OPERATOR

seated at his controls, working the winch. A cut above the other men, who are working their heads off. Operating the winch seems much easier.

LAMAR

nods to himself; he has seen what he likes; then continues towards the barracks.

12 EXT. A QUONSET HUT - DAWN

An outside loudspeaker blares out reveille.

13 INT. THE BARRACKS - DAWN

The door bangs open and the Petty Officer strides through, shouting.

PETTY OFFICER
All right, all right, drop your cocks and grab your socks! Everybody up! Up!

The men begin sleepily to roll out of their bunks.

JAMES

starts to get dressed, sees Lamar still lying on top of his bunk, still fully dressed. He winks at James.

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
See? You got to do all that work getting dressed, I'm ready.

JAMES
You sleep like that all night?

LAMAR
Bet you a dollar I did.

JAMES
(laughs)
How could I win?

LAMAR
You couldn't. Only kind of bet I make - heads I win, tails you lose. Piece of advice, James ... only bet on a sure thing.

JAMES
(amused)
How will I know what's sure?

LAMAR
Ask me.

He grins at James and gets out of bed and joins other men on the way to the head. James looks after him, amused.

EXT. THE BARRACKS - EARLY MORNING

as the men straggle out. Orders are being bellowed over a loudspeaker.

SPEAKER
Now, hear this! Now, hear this! Division Four, fall out! Fall out!

It keeps repeating this as the Petty Officer directs the men into a long trailer with windows along the sides.

INT. THE TRAILER - EARLY MORNING

The men packed in like sardines. James is jammed up against Lamar. When the men are all in, the door is slammed shut by the Petty Officer who disregards the jibes and curses hurled at him.
16  EXT. THE TRAILER - EARLY MORNING
It is pulled by a tractor which starts off now with a jerk.

17  INT. THE TRAILER - EARLY MORNING
The men jerked around. No one feels very good about all this.

LAMAR
He is particularly distressed, biting his lip as he tries to keep hold of himself.

JAMES
notices this. He opens his mouth to say something comforting, but Lamar turns away abruptly, not wanting anyone to see.

18  EXT. THE LOADING DOCKS - EARLY MORNING
The trailer pulls up and stops. The men clamber out and line up to the Petty Officer's commands. Lamar takes deep breaths of air as they watch the men loading.

ODELL
Little bird tells me I ain't gonna be too pleased by this work. Specially they try to send me down in that hole.

WENDELL
Hold, not hole ... hold. That's a ship's hold.

ODELL
Same difference.

BUDDY BOY
And what you mean, try to send you? They want to send you, Odell, you sent.

Two OFFICERS come to inspect them. One is ENSIGN HOLLISTER, the other LT. DE MARCO. Hollister is young and friendly. De Marco is older and tougher.
DE MARCO
All right, you boys. This is what it's all about. Our men are fighting the Japs and they need bullets for their guns and bombs for their planes. And they need them now. So that's our job - getting this crap loaded and shipped out. Fast. No excuses. I catch anyone gold-bricking, it's their ass. You boys chopped enough cotton, so you know how to work hard. We shouldn't have any problems. We better not have any problems. That clear?
(no answer)
All right. Now, there's one specialty job. Anyone here know how to run a winch?

Several hands start to go up, but Lamar is first with an immediate answer.

LAMAR
I do, sir.

DE MARCO
Good. Come with me.

Lamar starts off with De Marco, winking at James. No hole for him.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

as the men are assigned to their loading jobs and start to work, supervised by their officers. James is sent down into the hold.

LAMAR
is led by De Marco to the winch on the deck of the Liberty ship. He gets confidently behind the controls and smiles at De Marco.

LAMAR
Give me a few minutes, sir. Been a little time since I handled one of these.

He manipulates the controls, nodding to himself. He seems to know what he's doing.

JAMES

(CONTINUED)
working in the hold below. It is hot, crowded and dangerous. Bombs are lowered in a net and the men have to take them out very carefully and stack them. James helps do this and then sends the net up again.

HIS POV - LAMAR

sitting grandly at the winch. He waves down at the sweating James.

DE MARCO AND HOLLISTER

Standing on the deck near Lamar. De Marco indicates the new men.

DE MARCO
What do you think?

HOLLISTER
They seem all right.

DE MARCO
But can we make any money with this bunch?

HOLLISTER
Leave me out of this, Al. It's still a lousy idea.

DE MARCO
(smiles at him)
Just crack the whip, Johnny. Baby needs a new pair of shoes.

He strolls away. Hollister looks after him without affection.

LAMAR

has overheard this; it interests him. He speaks now to Hollister, indicating the bombs.

LAMAR
These things loaded, sir?

HOLLISTER
Don't worry. They need detonators to go off.
LAMAR
(jokingly)
What happens I drop one?

HOLLISTER
Don't.

He walks off, Lamar looking after him.

THE DOCK

A load of bombs is taken off a freight car and loaded into a net. An OFFICER urges the men to work faster. The CAMERA FOLLOWS the net as Lamar swings it over on to the ship and positions it over the hold.

LAMAR

He is smart and a quick learner and able to conceal his inexperience. He lowers the net confidently into the hold where James and the others are working. But he drops it a little too fast.

THE HOLD

SHOOTING UP to the net as it plunges down - and James and Buddy Boy grab it just before it would crash. James lets out a big sigh and looks up balefully at Lamar, who only shrugs. He's doing his best.

INT. THE MESS HALL - NIGHT

The men getting their food from a chow line and taking it to long tables. They are nervous, apprehensive about what they are doing, arguing among themselves.

JAMES

Carrying his food, he sits down with an arguing group. Lamar is with them, quietly eating.

WENDELL

Fuck 'em all! I signed up to fight, not load no boxes!
ODELL
Nobody told me all we gonna be is no better than mules.

WENDELL
I'm gonna die, I want to die with a gun in my hand.

JAMES
Nobody's going to die.

ODELL
Man, them bombs is dangerous--

JAMES
Not if we handle them right.

Lamar laughs. James turns on him.

JAMES
They can't go off, they don't have fuses.

LAMAR
Gung-ho James. You swallow that shit like it's soda pop. There's gunpowder in them shells. T.N.T. They drop the right way, they'll still go off.

JAMES
(calmingly)
Tell me, Lamar - you ever operate a winch before?

LAMAR
I ain't talking winches--

JAMES
You can tell us. We all the same color here.

LAMAR
Ain't no trick running a winch. I seen it done a dozen times.

JAMES
But you never run one before.

LAMAR
You got eyes, you look, you learn.
JAMES
You the one liable to get us killed. Dropping them on our heads like you almost did. Not no one else - you.
(to the others)
Look. The Navy put us here on account of they need us. You can't fight a war without ammo ... stands to reason. So we got to do our duty. We got to obey the rules.

WENDELL
Else we all end up in the brig.

BUDDY BOY
Not if we stick together. Like we did at G.M.

WENDELL
You ain't back in Detroit, Buddy Boy. You ain't still on the line and you don't belong in no union. You in the United States Jim Crow Navy.

ODELL
And we still carrying the load for them.

JAMES
(fervent)
For us - that's who we carrying for. Ain't just going to the brig. It's the war ... our war just as much as theirs. Don't matter what they got us doing, we got to be proud. Do our duty like men ... so they see what Negroes can do, can really do. Show them pride. So they'll respect us.

He is persuasive, heartfelt. The men are silent. All except Lamar are impressed.

LAMAR
Hallelujah.

He stands with his plate and goes off to empty it in the trash.

21 EXT. THE LOADING DOCK - MORNING

The night shift is coming off work and being replaced by Division Four. The officer in charge of the night shift - LT. RANDOLPH - is stopped by De Marco.
DE MARCO
Hey, Randy--

RANDOLPH
Yeah?

DE MARCO
How much your boys do?

RANDOLPH
Two hundred twenty-five tons.

DE MARCO
That's good. That's very good. I'm lucky mine can do two hundred. And that's if I push the shit out of them. But you know what? Let's make it interesting. You spot me, say, twenty-five tons and we'll bet on it.

LAMAR
within earshot, listening.

DE MARCO AND RANDOLPH
oblivious to this. Lamar does not exist for them.

RANDOLPH
(dubious)
That such a good idea?

DE MARCO
We got to push them, anyway, keep the stuff moving. This just gets them moving faster.

RANDOLPH
(calculating)
If your boys do two hundred, you add the twenty-five, we're even. They don't do the two hundred, you lose the bet.

DE MARCO
(smiles)
I never lose. It's against my religion.

Randolph looks over to where De Marco's men are working slowly, still unused to the work.
RANDOLPH
For how much?

DE MARCO
Fifty bucks?

RANDOLPH
(watching the slow men)
Let's make it really interesting. A hundred.

DE MARCO
You're on.

They smile insincerely at each other and Randolph goes off. De Marco walks over to Hollister, who supervises the initial loading from freight car to dock.

DE MARCO
(to Hollister)
Faster. I found a pigeon.

HOLLISTER
Come on, Al, they're just getting the hang--

DE MARCO
There's a war on, Johnny. In case you didn't notice. So pick up the pace. They can learn on the job.

LAMAR
watching this. From his POV, he sees the men being urged to work faster. It gives him an idea. He is smiling to himself as suddenly there is a loud screeching SOUND from the winch. Lamar stops working and calls to his signal man - WENDELL - who stands at the rail.

LAMAR
Wendell, how much in the net?

WENDELL
(checks the net)
Six tons. Shit, it's only supposed to hold five.

(CONTINUED)
DE MARCO
(coming up)
What's the problem here?

LAMAR
Brake bands overheating, sir. Too much in the net.

DE MARCO
Too much, my ass. That winch is good up to ten tons.

LAMAR
If the brakes ain't good--

DE MARCO
There's nothing the matter with the brakes. They get hot, water them down. Now, keep this stuff moving.

LAMAR
Yes, sir. Right away, sir. Moving, sir.

De Marco leaves. Lamar carefully manipulates the winch. It still smokes.

WENDELL
(helpfully)
I could piss on it.

LAMAR
Get some water.

James' head appears from the hold.

JAMES
What's holding us up?

Wendell has grabbed a pail and now pours water on the winch brakes. A cloud of steam comes up as Lamar swings the overloaded net around towards James' head.

JAMES
Watch it!

And the net breaks.

THREE BOMBS
Fall out.

(continues)
THE MEN
freeze in horror.

THE BOMBS
drop and roll along the deck - and come to stop peacefully
against a rail.

THE MEN
Still frozen.

LAMAR
(finally, to James)
Well ... I didn't drop them on your head.

James starts to laugh. Lamar and Wendell join in and the
three of them laugh with hysterical relief.

22
EXT. A QUONSET HUT - EVENING
Lamar walks up and goes in.

23
INT. THE HUT - EVENING
The C.P.O. is behind a desk. He motions Lamar towards a door.

24
INT. AN OFFICE - EVENING
De Marco sits behind a desk, writing, as Lamar comes in and
salutes. De Marco returns the salute.

DE MARCO
What happened today, sailor, was serious.
Very serious.
(indicates his writing)
I have to make out a report.

LAMAR
Yes, sir.
DE MARCO
The truth is that it was a preventable accident.

LAMAR
The brakes were no good.

DE MARCO
That makes it an accident. What makes it preventable is that you could have told me, your superior officer, and there would have been no accident.

LAMAR
Yes, sir.

DE MARCO
(pointedly)
But you didn't.

LAMAR
No, sir.

DE MARCO
You kept on working a winch with defective brakes. That's a serious offense.

LAMAR
Yes, sir. It made you lose your bet.

De Marco looks at him for a long moment. Lamar's face and tone have been expressionless. Then De Marco motions to a chair.

DE MARCO
Sit down.
(Lamar sits)
What's your name?

LAMAR
Lamar, sir.

DE MARCO
You think you're pretty smart, don't you, Lamar?

LAMAR
Yes, sir.
DE MARCO

Smart or smart-ass?

LAMAR

Both, sir.

DE MARCO

That could get you in a lot of trouble.

LAMAR

Yes, sir. Gets you out, too, sometimes.

DE MARCO

You got a lot of nigger nerve, Lamar, accusing an officer of making bets on men loading ammunition. I could throw you in the brig for that.

LAMAR

Yes, sir, I know. You could do that for sure. But you want to win them bets, I'm more good to you on the out than the in.

De Marco looks at him again for a moment.

DE MARCO

How?

For the first time, Lamar's expression changes. He smiles.

INT. THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

as Lamar makes his way from one end to the other, stopping before groups of men to whisper confidentially to them. He does not include James, who is reading a book on his bunk. When he has finished, he returns to his own bunk and James speaks without looking at him.

JAMES

What you got up your crooked sleeve, Lamar?

LAMAR

Don't worry, country boy. You included.

James looks at him now. Lamar looks back blandly.

JAMES

Someday, you just gonna fly right up your own asshole.

(CONTINUED)
He returns to his reading. Lamar only smiles.

EXT. THE LOADING DOCK AND SHIP - DAY

The men working, but this time with speed and dispatch. Lamar at the winch, Wendell standing by with a pail of water, continuously dousing the brakes.

DE MARCO

watching with approval.

JAMES

working in the hold, both pleased by how the men are working and suspicious at why.

LAMAR

at the winch, exhorting and cheering them on.

THE MEN

responding.

INT. THE OFFICERS CLUB - NIGHT

Randolph at the bar with other officers as De Marco comes in and throws a piece of paper on the bar in front of him.

DE MARCO

Two hundred and forty tons.
(to the bartender)
Drinks are on me.

He smiles as an unbelieving Randolph pays up the money.

INT. THE RECREATION ROOM - NIGHT

Men playing cards, listening to a radio, playing at the one ping-pong table. Lamar comes in, carrying a full barracks bag. He empties the contents on to the ping-pong table, stopping the game.

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
Come and get it!

The contents are cartons of cigarettes, candy, tobacco and other goodies. The men flock to get it. Lamar sees James sitting by himself and goes over to him and throws down a carton of cigarettes before him.

LAMAR
Told you, James. You included.

JAMES
Don't smoke, Lamar.

LAMAR
(nods)
Should of figured that. Maybe you can trade them for a candy bar.

JAMES
Where's all this stuff come from?

LAMAR
Ain't stolen, that what you mean.

JAMES
That what you got for the speed-up?

LAMAR
What you care? You been the one calling for speed-up. Helping the war effort, right? Show them what Negroes can do. You got no complaint.

JAMES
There's going fast and there's going too fast. I told you before, you're going to get us killed.

LAMAR
We did two hundred forty tons today. We showed them, right? Ain't that what you been preaching about?

(points to the men)
Those men are feeling proud.

JAMES
What they proud for, Lamar ... that they worked good for the white man on account of he paid them? They been doing that all their life. They got a chance now of doing something else, something you can't buy--

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
It's all buying, country boy. Buying and selling. Just got to know how much it costs.
(picks up the carton)
No sense wasting this. You'll just give it away.

He goes back to the others.

EXT. A NAVY SHIP - DAY

being loaded. Hollister is on the dock, supervising, De Marco is not to be seen. Lamar is working the winch, helped by Wendell who pours water whenever the brakes start smoking. Once the brakes slip and Lamar stops the winch just in time to keep a loaded net from dropping. After that, he proceeds more slowly.

A NAVAL OFFICER

watches from the bridge. He is the quarter-deck officer of the ship. He calls down irritably to Lamar.

OFFICER
Move your ass down there! We got to get out of here!

LAMAR
Yes, sir. Moving, sir.

But he still has to proceed warily and the officer gets angrier.

OFFICER
You hear me, nigger? Get your black ass in gear!

Lamar stops what he is doing. So do the other sailors on the ship and in the hold who have heard this. Lamar looks up at the officer.

OFFICER
You heard me. I'd be better off getting Japs to do this than you niggers. All you know how to do is quit.

LAMAR
Yes, sir. You right, sir. That's what I'm doing right now.
He turns off the winch and starts off.

OFFICER
You're what?

LAMAR
Quitting, sir. Me and the other niggers. So you can get yourself some of them hard-working Japs.

He starts off the ship. Wendell follows him and so do the men from the hold. James pulls Lamar aside.

JAMES
You know what you're doing? What they can do to us?

OFFICER
(yelling after them)
Come back here, nigger! You come on back!

LAMAR
(to James)
You want to take that shit? For the war effort?

OFFICER
You hear me, boy?

JAMES
(to Lamar)
What you waiting for?

The two of them go off with the others.

30 EXT. THE LOADING DOCK - DAY

as word of what happened spreads among the men. They drop their tools and follow Lamar. Hollister just stands there, watching them march off. The officer shouts down to him.

OFFICER
They're your niggers! Get them back!

HOLLISTER
(evenly)
Why don't you just shut your big, ugly mouth before somebody shuts it for you?
INT. THE BARRACKS - DAY

The men mill around, uncertain and a little afraid. They know what they have done and what the punishment can be. At the same time, they are excited and pleased at having taken a stand.

LAMAR

lies on his bunk, accepting compliments. He is properly modest, which amuses James, sitting on his own bunk.

DE MARCO

slams into the room, followed by the CPO.

PETTY OFFICER

Ten-shut!

The men spring to attention. Judgment has arrived.

DE MARCO

At ease.

He looks them over for a moment. His face is stern. They are expecting the worst.

DE MARCO

Ensign Hollister told me what happened. The officer who said those things has been reprimanded. It will not happen again. What will also not happen again is any of my men walking off the job. Is that clear? The next man who walks off, I don't care what the reason, I guarantee he will be one black sorry-ass son of a bitch. Is that clear?

He pauses. No one says anything.

DE MARCO

This time, there will be no punishment. Get back to work.

He turns and goes out with Hollister. There is a moment of silence and then a long collective sigh of relief, followed by cries of victory. They have stood up for themselves and gotten away with it. They surround Lamar, their hero, as they head for the door. James follows slowly, smiling with a kind
CONTINUED:

gotten away with it. They surround Lamar, their hero, as they head for the door. James follows slowly, smiling with a kind of grudging admiration.

EXT. THE SHIP - DAY

Lamar and Wendell watch as an older white CIVILIAN MACHINIST works on the winch. De Marco watches as well.

MACHINIST
(shakes his head)
This thing been carrying too heavy a load. That's why the brakes going bad.

LAMAR
Think they can still hold?

MACHINIST
(shrugs)
Need new linings.

DE MARCO
They've been requisitioned. Meanwhile, we need the winch. Can you make the brakes hold?

MACHINIST
For a while.

DE MARCO
Don't give me for a while. I don't want to hear that shit. You got a job to do, do it. Make them hold.
    (to Lamar)
No slowdown, Lamar.

LAMAR
No, sir. Not us.

De Marco goes off. The machinist looks after him, hefting his wrench.

MACHINIST
We wasn't in a war, he talks to me like that, I'd of bent this over his head.

LAMAR
He wouldn't even feel it.

They get back to work.
as the door bursts open and a bunch of the sailors dash out. They are in their dress uniforms and they are full of high spirits as they head for the gate.

Lamar lies on his bunk watching James, also in his dress uniform, comb his hair in front of a mirror. A radio plays.

**LAMAR**
You pretty as a picture, country boy. The ladies gonna line up just to look at you.

**JAMES**
Ain't you coming?

**LAMAR**
Oh, I'll be along.

**JAMES**
You'll miss the bus.

**LAMAR**
Bus too cramped, anyway. Don't like all that jamming together. I'll catch me a ride.

(grins)
Want to bet I still get there before you?

**JAMES**
I wouldn't bet you the sun comes up tomorrow.

(gives himself a final lick)
First pass they give us, you got to take advantage.

He smiles at Lamar, pockets his comb, and goes out. The barracks are empty. Lamar lies there, comfortably listening to the radio.

A bus pulls in and the black sailors pour out and head off. Two white SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES lounge nearby, keeping a hostile eye on them.
EXT. AN OAKLAND STREET - NIGHT

in a white neighborhood. James, Odell, Wendell and Buddy Boy come up to a large building with a USO sign out front. They automatically start into it, but their path is blocked by two white M.P.s who just shake their heads at them.

ODELL
We allowed, ain't we?

M.P.
You're allowed, but you wouldn't have a good time.

BUDDY BOY
That's for us to know and you to find out.

He starts to go past them, but they still block the way.

M.P.
I'm telling you nice. You ain't wanted in there.

Buddy Boy opens his mouth to protest, but James pulls him aside.

JAMES
We don't got to go where we ain't wanted.

EXT. ANOTHER OAKLAND STREET - NIGHT

A black neighborhood. The four of them wander down the street, which is alive with black soldiers, sailors, a few civilians. The street is lined with bars and juke joints and the SOUND of loud music blares out from them. The men ogle the women who pass by, either in pairs or groups or on the arms of other SERVICEMEN. They pass a nondescript building with a USO sign and go in.

INT. THE USO HALL - NIGHT

It is quiet and decorous. Everyone there is black. A few couples dance decorously to recorded music. Smiling BLACK WOMEN stand decorously behind a table on which are cookies and soft drinks. The group comes in and looks around and then James laughs and shakes his head.

HIS POV - LAMAR

(CONTINUED)
sitting alone at a table. He smiles at them.

THE GROUP

walks over to him.

LAMAR
What took you so long?
(to James)
Smart not to bet, James. You learning.

JAMES
You caught a ride.

LAMAR
I didn't walk.
(stands)
Come on, let's blow this joint.

WENDELL
We just got here.

ODELL
(eyeing the table)
They got eats.

LAMAR
(dismissive)
Cookies and soda. And you call that
music? I'm falling asleep. Let's go.
(needling James)
You can stay, country boy. Maybe they'll
have a square dance.

He starts out. The others follow obediently; he has become
their leader. James brings up the rear.

INT. A JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

The group sitting at a table, pitchers of beer before them.
Couples gyrate on the dance floor. The music is loud. They
have their eye on a pretty girl who sits at a table with
another less pretty, overweight girl. The pretty girl is
named DOLORES and the other one MARY LOU. Lamar indicates
Dolores.

LAMAR
(appreciatively)
That one's for me.
BUDDY BOY
I'll take the other one. I like a little meat on the bones.

LAMAR
No, mine's the pick of the litter.

JAMES
They're not dogs, you know.

ODELL
That one ain't, anyway. She's a pip.

LAMAR
(stands)
Boys ... you can cover my rear.

He walks over to their table. Odell, Wendell and Buddy Boy follow. James remains.

THE TABLE
as Lamar and the others come up. He smiles ingratiatingly at the two girls.

LAMAR
Now, I know you pretty ladies ain't lonesome. You can have any of those boys you got a mind to. But ...

(he sits)
None of them got what we boys from the Fourth Division got.

MARY LOU
What you got that they ain't got?

DOLORES
Don't say ain't, Mary Lou.

MARY LOU
Excuse me. Haven't got.

LAMAR
(grandly)
Combat experience.

MARY LOU
You boys been in combat?
LAMAR
Atlantic and Pacific.

DOLORES
They let colored sailors in combat?

LAMAR
Only the cream of the crop.

ODELL
That's us.

DOLORES
I have a cousin in the Navy. He's a messman and he says they only let Negroes be stewards or maybe stevedores.

LAMAR
Well, meaning no offense, maybe your cousin just don't qualify for the cream.

ODELL
Maybe he just the milk.

LAMAR
Now ... you girls know a nice place around here we can get some good feed? I mean, we get what you call nourished in the Navy, but we don't get what you would call fed.

MARY LOU
Well, there's Sister Susan's for ribs—

BUDDY BOY
Sounds good to me.

LAMAR
How about it?

Dolores has been looking over at James, sitting alone.

DOLORES
What's the matter with your friend?

LAMAR
Country boy?
  (taps his head)
Little slow up here. Got kicked in the head by a mule back on the farm. Pay him no mind. Now, which way is Sister Susan's?
DOLORES
Well ... first I have to powder my nose.

MARY LOU
Me, too.

They stand and head off to the ladies room. Lamar smiles at the other three.

LAMAR
See that ... sometimes you fall into shit and come up with diamonds.

THE DANCE
Couples dancing away.

THE BAND
Playing away. The music ends with a flourish.

THE GROUP
as Mary Lou returns to the table. Alone.

LAMAR
Where's your friend?

MARY LOU
Oh, she said to tell you she was going home. She don't feel too well. She says she's sorry.
(brightly)
But I could eat a horse.

Buddy Boy is the only one pleased by this.

WENDELL
Where's James?

They follow his gaze and look over to James' table, James is not there. Lamar looks at the empty table thoughtfully.

EXT. A STREET - NIGHT
as James walks along with Dolores.

(CONTINUED)
DOLORES
Won't they be mad at you?

JAMES
Lamar, maybe, he had his eye on you. Figured he was getting you all to his self. Won't your friend be mad at you?

DOLORES
Mary Lou? With four boys all to her self? She's in heaven.

JAMES
Me, too.

DOLORES
(smiles)
What's your name?

JAMES
James. What's yours?

DOLORES
Dolores. It's a Spanish name, but I'm not Spanish. My momma named me after Dolores del Rio ... the movie star?

JAMES
(apologetically)
We don't get too many movies where I come from.

DOLORES
It means pain in Spanish. Dolor means pain. When I found that out, I wanted my momma to change it, but she said it was too late.

JAMES
I think it's pretty. And it suits you. I don't mean the pain part, I mean the sound of it ... Dolores. It's pretty like you.

DOLORES
Thank you.

JAMES
I appreciate you letting me walk you home.
DOLORES
I don't want you to think I let just anybody walk me home.

JAMES
Oh, I don't think that at all--

DOLORES
You just looked so sad and lonesome sitting there. Why didn't you come over with the rest of them?

JAMES
Figured I'd do better looking sad and lonesome.

She looks at him. He smiles. She smiles in return.

EXT. A SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

Neat and well-kept on a street of similar small, neat houses. James and Dolores come up to it, James talking earnestly.

JAMES
I mean, we just got to play by the rules. That's what's so hard to get the guys to understand ... we're in a war and the Navy's going to realize they need us once we show them what we can do. I mean, it's one step at a time.

DOLORES
You so sure the white man's going to realize?

JAMES
We have to make him realize. We have to be the best there is. I mean, once we--

He stops as they come up to the porch. Sitting on the steps is Lamar. He speaks to Dolores.

LAMAR
Your momma said you never stay out late, so I figured my boy here'd be getting you home soon.

(to James)
Thank you, James.
NO REASON, LAMAR.

LAMAR
Well, you got the pretty lady home safe and sound, didn't you? That's something to be thankful for. All these evil soldiers and sailors about.
(to Dolores)
My boy give you any trouble, ma'am?

DOLORES
Not a bit.

LAMAR
Didn't do nothing he shouldn't of done--

DOLORES
James was a perfect gentleman.

LAMAR
That's my James.
(to James)
We best be getting on back to the station before we miss our bus, James. Long walk back to base.

James hesitates a moment, evaluating the situation. Lamar is obviously not going to let him be alone with this girl. He nods.

JAMES
(to Dolores)
It was a pleasure making your acquaintance, Dolores.

DOLORES
The same for me, James.

LAMAR
When you two getting married?

JAMES
(to Dolores)
I'll give you a call when we get our next leave.

DOLORES
I'll be waiting.
JAMES
Good night.

DOLORES
Good night, James.
(to Lamar, sweetly)
Good night.

She goes into the house. James turns and starts away, Lamar following. They walk in silence until they are out of sight of the house. Then Lamar suddenly and savagely slugs James from behind. He knocks James to the ground and starts hitting him.

LAMAR
Don't you ever cut in on me like that.
You hear? You son of a bitch perfect gentleman, you hear? You hear me? Don't you ever!

A HOUSE

as a window goes up and the face of a WOMAN appears. She sees the two sailors fighting and disappears back into the room.

JAMES AND LAMAR
continuing to fight, rolling over and over on the ground, neither getting an advantage.

A POLICE CAR

pulls up with a squeal of brakes and the two deputies from the bus station leap out, clubs drawn. One of them grabs Lamar and drags him off James and starts beating him.

FIRST DEPUTY
You want to fight, black boy? That what you want? Not in my town, you don't.

James staggers up and tries to go to Lamar's aid, but the other deputy waves him back with his gun. The first deputy finishes with Lamar.
FIRST DEPUTY
Next time you come to town, you'll remember, won't you? You behave yourself, nigger. You don't have no U.S. government wiping your ass in Oakland. Remember that.

He turns back to the car and Lamar leaps on him. The second deputy draws his gun, but James jumps him, knocking the gun into the bushes. He wrests away the man's club and knocks him down with it, then goes to Lamar's aid. Together, they also knock down the first deputy.

JAMES
Run!

He pulls Lamar away and they disappear into the darkness as the two deputies struggle dazedly to their feet.

EXT. A STREET CORNER - NIGHT
They pause for breath and then Lamar starts down a street, but James pulls him back. Lamar points.

LAMAR
(panting)
Bus station that way ...

JAMES
(the same)
First place they'll look.

LAMAR
All niggers look alike to them.

JAMES
Not if they look like a truck run over their face. Come on ... you're so hot at getting rides. Get us a ride.

EXT. A ROAD OUT OF TOWN - NIGHT
It has started to rain. James and Lamar are both miserable, hurting and dripping wet as they stand on the side of the road, vainly thumbing for a ride. Cars are few and far between and none of them stops at night for two black sailors. James looks at Lamar, who can only shrug: not his fault.

(CONTINUED)
JAMES
(irritably)
You had to go after that cop.

LAMAR
What about you and the other cop?

JAMES
He'd have shot you. Would have served you right, you dumb shit.

LAMAR
You the dumb one. Turning your back on a guy you just cut out with a girl. That's dumb.

JAMES
Yeah. All my fault we're out in the middle of nowhere, half-drowned.
(as a car whizzes by)
Thought you were the champ at this.

LAMAR
It's different at night. They can't see us so good.

JAMES
Yeah. Another reason for being white.

LAMAR
(a faint smile)
You learning fast, country boy.

JAMES
Not from you.

Another car passes. They wave without success.

EXT. PORT CHICAGO BASE - DAWN

A truck pulls up, driven by a BLACK MAN, and James and Lamar hop out, wave their thanks to the driver and race on to the base.

INT. THE BARRACKS - DAWN

as they race in. Everyone is asleep. Lamar just flops down on his bunk and closes his eyes. James hastily strips off his wet uniform and climbs into bed. He takes a deep sigh of relief and closes his eyes. And the CPO bursts into the room, striding down the aisle at the same time as the public address system loudspeaker blares out reveille.

(CONTINUED)
PETTY OFFICER
Okay, drop your socks and grab your cocs! On your feet! Everybody up!

James and Lamar both open their eyes. They look over at each other, then slowly and painfully start getting out of bed.

EXT. THE LOADING DOCK - DAY

The men working swiftly, loading a Liberty ship called the BRYAN. A jeep pulls up with De Marco and he gets out and goes over to Hollister.

HOLLISTER
What'd the Admiral want?

DE MARCO
You ready for this? He's got the Quinault Victory coming in tonight which means we've got to finish up the Bryan.

HOLLISTER
Can't do that, Al. The Bryan takes eighty-five hundred tons.

DE MARCO
We only have to do half of that. Third Division does the rest.

HOLLISTER
Two shifts can't do that much. I'm not even sure three--

DE MARCO
I don't want any argument, John--

HOLLISTER
These men can't work any faster--

DE MARCO
How do they know till they've tried?

HOLLISTER
You sure this isn't to win some cheap bet?

DE MARCO
You want to go talk to the Admiral? I'm sure he'd welcome your opinion. Just crank it up, Johnny. They're good boys, they'll come through. They like you. And my bets aren't cheap.

(CONTINUED)
He starts off, but Hollister stops him. He points to where the men are very carefully unloading very large and heavy bombs from a freight car.

HOLLISTER
(quietly)
Those are incendiary bombs, Al.

DE MARCO
I know what they are.

HOLLISTER
These have fuses in them ... activating mechanisms.

DE MARCO
Tell me something I don't know--

HOLLISTER
You can't go fast with these bombs. They're hot cargo. Look at them cross-eyed, they'll go off.

DE MARCO
So what do you want me to do? There's a fucking war on--

HOLLISTER
I can't speed up anymore with those bombs. It's too dangerous.

DE MARCO
Speed up, Johnny. That's an order. I got my orders, now you've got yours. Just rub their heads for luck.

He gets back in the jeep and drives off. Hollister looks after him for a moment, then turns back to his men. He hesitates before speaking. When he does, his voice is firm.

HOLLISTER
Pick it up, men. We have to get this ship loaded. You're falling behind. Come on, now. Move it.

The men start working faster, loading the seven-hundred pound bombs into the cargo net.

LAMAR
operates the winch as it pulls the net sagging with the weight of the bombs up to the ship. The brakes begin to steam again and Wendell pours water on them.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

WENDELL
I thought he fixed this mother.

LAMAR
Don't think so much.

He lowers the net slowly into the hold. It grazes the side and everyone holds his breath.

JAMES
in the hold with his crew. They grab the net and slowly take out the bombs and very carefully place them alongside others, each separated by buffers. When it is done, there is a long collective sigh of relief.

JAMES
Good. We're doing good.

EXT. THE BARRACKS - LATE AFTERNOON

The tractor-trailer pulls up and the men disembark. They are totally fatigued as they stumble into the barracks, worn out from the work.

INT. THE BARRACKS - LATE AFTERNOON

as the men stream in. They sit or flop on their bunks, too tired even to talk.

EXT. THE BARRACKS AREA - NIGHT

It is quiet except for low SOUNDS from the rec room: pool balls clicking against each other, ping-pong being played, scratchy music from a phonograph. In the distance are the bright lights from the loading dock.

EXT. THE LOADING DOCK/SHIPS

The scene brightly lit. The BRYAN is tied up on one side of the dock, the new QUINALT VICTORY on the other. Men from the Third Division are working as fast as they can to finish loading the BRYAN.
INT. THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

Dark. Most of the men asleep. A few play cards on a bed, lit by a flashlight.

INT. AN OFFICERS' ROOM - NIGHT

Small, bare, functional. Hollister sits at a desk, writing a letter.

INT. THE OFFICERS' CLUB - NIGHT

De Marco drinking at the bar with other officers. They are laughing at someone's joke.

INT. THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

The CAMERA MOVING IN on James lying asleep.

EXT. THE LOADING DOCK/SHIP

The CAMERA MOVING IN on the work. Men working as fast as they can.

INT. THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

The CAMERA MOVING IN on the sleeping Lamar.

EXT. THE LOADING DOCK/SHIP

The CAMERA STILL MOVING IN.

The SCREEN goes suddenly dead white.

INT. THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

There is the SOUND of an enormous EXPLOSION. Men are catapulted out of their beds. Window glass breaks. Walls collapse. There are shouts and screams as men stagger around bloodied or try to dig out from under debris. Pandemonium reigns

JAMES

(CONTINUED)
picks himself up from the floor where he has been thrown.

LAMAR

does the same. Neither can talk as they stagger towards the entrance. Men are trying to help other men who have been cut by the flying glass or otherwise hurt.

JAMES

turns one man over to find him dead with a shard of glass in his neck.

LAMAR

stops to help another man tie a tourniquet around his bleeding arm. All around them is chaos and destruction.

EXT. THE BARRACKS - NIGHT

as the men find their way out of the collapsed building. Other barracks are crumpled, bloodied men staggering out of them, too. In the distance, great billows of smoke and flame shoot up from the loading dock. There is a cacophony of voices.

VOICES

The Japs! It's the Japs! We been bombed!
Pearl Harbor! We been bombed! Help! Help me! Help!

First aid trucks roar up and MEDICS jump out to help the injured. A jeep races up, driven by De Marco, yelling.

DE MARCO

I need some men - now! Ammo's still in the barge! We got to get it out!

Men jump in the jeep, James and Lamar among them.

PETTY OFFICER

(dazed)
What happened, sir?

DE MARCO

Explosion on the dock. Let's go!

The jeep roars off. A shocked Odell tugs at the Chief's sleeve.
ODELL
Where's Wendell?

PETTY OFFICER
How the hell do I know?

ODELL
I can't find him!
(calls out)
Wendell! Wendell.

He wanders around, calling out the name.

WENDELL
I'm here.

Odell turns and searches the faces of other men, but can't recognize Wendell. Then he hears Wendell's voice again.

WENDELL
I'm here, Odell.

Odell goes closer to one man whose face is so covered with blood as to be unrecognizable. It is Wendell.

ODELL
Wendell?

Wendell nods.

EXT. THE LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

Neither the dock nor the ships can be seen because of the smoke and fire. De Marco and his men finish beating back several fires that are coming perilously close to the ammunition piled in the barges. They use hoses, buckets of water from the sea, anything at hand to smother the blaze. Finally, the fires are put out. James and Lamar stand wearily together, looking at the wall of dense smoke that prevents them from seeing the rest of the dock and the ships.

JAMES
Wonder what's still there.

LAMAR
You don't want to know.
as ADMIRAL WRIGHT, his CHIEF OF STAFF, De Marco and other OFFICERS walk towards the dock. They pass rows of body bags. The scene is one of total desolation. They stop at the dock. It is no longer there. Neither are the two ships. The hull of one of them can be seen sticking out of the water. Bits and pieces of the ships float on the water. They silently survey the scene.

WRIGHT
(finally)
What's the body count?

CHIEF OF STAFF
Three hundred and twenty dead. Admiral. But we could only identify fifty-one of them. The rest ...

His voice trails off.

WRIGHT
Any leads on how it happened?

CHIEF OF STAFF
Obviously, an accident—

WRIGHT
Nothing's obvious. It could be sabotage. How many injured?

CHIEF OF STAFF
About four hundred. It's just awful. Some of the dead can't even be identified. Just bits and pieces—

WRIGHT
I want to speak to the men.

WRIGHT
I'm very pleased that Negro personnel from this department performed bravely and efficiently in this emergency. As real Navy men, you acted according to our service's highest tradition. The men who helped put out those fires will all get a commendation.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

He pauses for effect, but the men are still too traumatized to react. They just stand there numbly.

WRIGHT
And I'll see you'll all get survivor's leave. After what's happened, you're certainly entitled to a good, long furlough. Meanwhile, you men will be assigned to Mare Island. And don't worry. This won't happen again.

He smiles encouragingly at them and gets into a jeep and takes off. The men move slowly towards waiting trucks and get in. The trucks head for the gate.

INT. A TRUCK - MORNING

James, Lamar, Odell, Wendell and Buddy Boy sit together. They are still in a state of shock. Wendell's face is heavily bandaged. Odell points out.

ODELL
That's the Third Division.

THEIR POV - ROWS OF COFFINS

laid out on the ground, some of them still being nailed down by sailors. Other sailors carry full body bags and lower them into coffins.

THE MEN

watch silently.

EXT. THE TRUCKS - MORNING

head out of the gate and down the road.

EXT. THE TOWN OF PORT CHICAGO - MORNING

as the trucks rumble through. The town is a mess, houses blown down by the explosion, townspeople picking up the pieces or just standing around, still in a daze. The trucks pass a movie theatre with its side blown out and the marquee hanging crazily.
INT. THE TRUCK - MORNING

Lamar points to the name of the movie that had been playing.

LAMAR
I seen that picture. Wasn't no good, anyhow.

EXT. THE TRUCKS - MORNING

as they roll on.

EXT. MARE ISLAND - DAY

The trucks roll through the gate and on to the base. They stop before some barracks and the men pile out and go inside.

INT. THE BARRACKS - DAY

The men select bunks and start unpacking. James and Lamar are next to each other again. The men are nervous and still frightened. They talk as they unpack and make their beds.

ODELL
It's them Japs, I tell you. Just like Pearl Harbor.

WENDELL
What about the Germans? They could of done it, too.

LAMAR
It wasn't no Japs and it wasn't no Germans. It was the fucking United States Navy.

BUDDY BOY
It was a goddamn speed-up, pushing us like that. I seen it on the assembly line. Guys getting hurt all the time.

JAMES
It was an accident. A terrible accident. Accidents happen.
LAMAR
The Navy happens, that's what happens. The goddamn Jim Crow, fuck-the-colored Navy.

ODELL
Well, anyway, you heard the Admiral. We get our furlough and then we'll be reassigned.

WENDELL
Then who's going to load the ammo? They gotta have somebody.

JAMES
Civilian longshoremen, most likely.

ODELL
You think maybe we'll get to go on a ship? I wouldn't mind being a steward. I worked in a restaurant once.

WENDELL
They give us a commendation. That's gotta mean something.

BUDDY BOY
I just want a gun in my hands, not no loading hook. You got a chance with a gun, you got no chance down in that hold.

There is the sudden loud SOUND of a door slamming and all the men jump with fear. Odell dives under the bed.

THE CPO
stands at the door which he has just slammed coming in.

PETTY OFFICER
At ease! At ease! Forget it! Nothing happened!

He takes a sheet of paper from his pocket.

PETTY OFFICER
Details for the day. Guard duty--
(reads off names)
K.P.
(more names)
Yard duty.
LAMAR  
(calls out)  
What about leave?  

BUDDY BOY  
When do we get our leave?  

PETTY OFFICER  
You get it when you get it.  

He continues reading off more details and men's names.  

LAMAR  
(persisting)  
The Admiral said we'd get leave.  

PETTY OFFICER  
You want to run around the base with a 
full pack, Lamar? You heard what I said. 
You get leave when they tell you.  

But other men call out, wanting to know about leave, about 
what work they will do, about getting transferred to combat 
duty. The voices rise, becoming more heated.  

INT. A HEARING ROOM - DAY  

And the men's angry voices become the angry voices of Navy 
OFFICERS arguing with each other. They stand before a seated 
panel of three other OFFICERS, sitting as a court: 
CAPTAINS COOK, CRENSHAW AND HOLDEN. The officers arguing are 
CAPTAINS GOSS and KINNE on one side and CAPT. CARTER and a 
civilian, MARTENS, on the other. They are talking one on top 
of the other, Capt. Crenshaw vainly trying to intervene.  

GOSS  
We took every precaution!  

CARTER  
All you cared about was output! You 
didn't give a damn about safety!  

KINNE  
Who the hell are you to say?  

CARTER  
I'm the director of the goddamned port!  

GOSS  
Then you should have gotten people with 
experience to run it!  

(CONTINUED)
MARTENS
My people were not responsible--

GOSS
Don't try passing the buck--

MARTENS
I warned you! The way you were going - I
told you what would happen! You were
heading for this!

KINNE
Bullshit!

CRENSHAW
(banging the table)
That's enough!
(as they subside)
This is a court of inquiry, not some
backyard brawl. I want some facts here.
You want to argue, take it outside. Right
now, the Admiral's waiting, the whole
Navy's waiting. They want an answer and
we've got to give it to them. What
happened and who's to blame?

EXT. PORT CHICAGO LOADING AREA - DAY

There is no SOUND. The scene is still one of desolation as
INVESTIGATORS pick over the rubble, looking for clues. Every
once in a while, they come across an arm or a leg or another
body part that has still not been recovered. As they
silently work, the VOICE of Crenshaw can be heard.

CRENSHAW
(V.O)
The decision of the court of inquiry is
that the explosion was an accident. No
evidence has indicated any act of
sabotage. As for equipment problems and
loading procedures, the testimony was
inconclusive. There was some competition
between divisions as to which could work
faster, but that was simply to help build
morale and give the men an esprit de
corps. This leaves the matter of
personnel. The consensus of opinion is
that the colored enlisted personnel are
neither temperamentally or intellectually
capable of handling high explosives. They
could not understand the orders given to
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CRENSHAW (cont'd)

them and the only way they could be made to understand was by actual demonstration. It is an admitted fact that there was rough and careless handling of the explosives being loaded aboard ships at Port Chicago.

An investigator turns over another body part.

INT. A MESS HALL - MORNING

as the men pass down the chow line, one of the mess men slaps a pair of work gloves on each tray.

ODELL
(puzzled)
What's these here for?

LAMAR
Just pour a little syrup on them. Won't taste no different then the hotcakes.

JAMES
They're work gloves.

WENDELL
Where they expecting us to work?

LAMAR
You seen that ship come in last night ... waiting to be loaded? That's for us.

JAMES
You don't know that for sure.

LAMAR
You want to bet?

BUDDY BOY
I ain't loading no ammo.

The others nod their assent.

EXT. THE MESS HALL - MORNING

De Marco, Hollister and the CPO are waiting for the men as they file out.

(CONTINUED)
PETTY OFFICER
Line up! Put on those gloves! Line up!
The men mutter as they line up.

PETTY OFFICER
Column right ... march!
The men start off, led by De Marco and Hollister, the CPO counting cadence as they go.

LAMAR
What about it, country boy, want to bet?

James is silent. Lamar indicates a dead end ahead of them. To the right is a parade ground. To the left are the docks and a ship.

LAMAR
We got to turn right or left. We turn left, we load that ship. I'll give you odds, James. Ten to one we turn left. What can you lose, a dollar?

JAMES
I'll take it.

The men approach the dead end. As they do, the CPO calls out.

PETTY OFFICER
Column ... left!!
And, spontaneously, the men stop.

PETTY OFFICER
Column left ... forward - march!
No one moves. Lamar looks at James, who looks straight ahead, but does not move.

LAMAR
Remember what I told you? Only bet on a sure thing.

DE MARCO
You heard the order, men. Column left ... forward march. Now, march!
No movement. James is conflicted, as are many of the men. They want to obey the order, but both fear and the solidarity of the other men hold them back. De Marco looks the men over and motions for Lamar to come up to him. Lamar does; De Marco's voice is low.

(CONTINUED)
DE MARCO
What the hell's going on here?

LAMAR
Beats the shit out of me, sir.

DE MARCO
You got anything to do with it?

LAMAR
No, sir. Not me. But I guess we all feeling the same.

De Marco looks over the men, then turns back to Lamar and raises his voice so the men can hear.

DE MARCO
You going back to work, sailor?

LAMAR
No, sir.

DE MARCO
You better have a damned good reason--

LAMAR
I'm scared, sir.

There is a murmur of assent from the men.

ODELL
(calls out)
He don't go back, I don't go back.

Other men call out, repeating that; the decision is unanimous. De Marco nods and turns to Hollister.

DE MARCO
Take these men over to the parade ground. Keep them at attention.

HOLLISTER
In this heat?

DE MARCO
They asked for it.
(to Lamar)
Get back in the ranks.

He strides off. Hollister nods to the CPO.

(CONTINUED)
PETTY OFFICER
Column right ... march!

The men turn right and march to the parade ground. They are not sure what they have done, but they all know it is something major.

EXT. THE PARADE GROUND - DAY

The men stand at attention in the hot sun as a jeep drives up and De Marco and a CHAPLAIN get out. The Chaplain mounts a podium and addresses the men. He is white and his tone is avuncular.

CHAPLAIN
At ease, boys.

(as they relax)
Case you don't know, I'm the base chaplain. You know the expression - tell it to the chaplain. Well, I'm here to listen. So why don't you just gather round so we can talk this thing over?

He motions to them and they break gratefully from attention and gather round the podium.

CHAPLAIN
Okay. What's the trouble?

ODELL
We don't want to be loading that ammunition.

CHAPLAIN
It's your duty, son.

LAMAR
It ain't our duty to get killed on account of some accident.

CHAPLAIN
It's your duty to follow orders.

BUDDY BOY
Not if we got to load like we did. You seen it ain't safe--

JAMES
Have they changed anything, sir? Or are we loading like we did before?
DE MARCO  
Nothing's been changed. There's a ship waiting and we're ordered to load it.

CHAPLAIN  
I know you're frightened. I'd be frightened, too. But courage is doing what you have to do even if you're scared. There are boys like you ... Negro boys ... fighting right now over in Europe. Don't you think they're frightened? But they're doing their duty. You owe it to them to do yours.

LAMAR  
We'll do our duty. We just won't load that ammo.

BUDDY BOY  
Any other duty, you just got to ask, we'll do it quicker'n you can jump.

ODELL  
You want us to fight, we'll fight, all right. Just give us a gun.

The men signify their assent again.

DE MARCO  
(taking over)  
Okay, padre, you tried.  
(to Hollister)  
Take them over to the barge and put them inside. And put guards on them.

HOLLISTER  
There's not enough room in that barge--

DE MARCO  
That's their problem.

HOLLISTER  
(lowers his voice)  
The barge holds seventy-five men. We've got over two hundred here.

DE MARCO  
So they'll sweat a little.

HOLLISTER  
Jesus, Al--
DE MARCO
Do it.

He turns away. The chaplain addresses the men again.

CHAPLAIN
(sadly)
I have to tell you boys, you are not being a credit to your race.

EXT. A BARGE - DAY
Tied up alongside a pier. The men are being marched onto the deck and then through a narrow door into the area beneath, watched by MARINE GUARDS. Lamar holds back.

JAMES
Come on, Lamar--

LAMAR
I ain't going down in there.

JAMES
Don't start no foolishness now. We done enough for one day. Come on--

He urges Lamar inside with the rest of the men.

INT. THE BARGE - DAY
as they jam in together. There are no windows and only the one door. The men are both defiant and frightened, not knowing what will happen to them.

ODELL
What you think they gonna do to us, Lamar?

LAMAR
Ask country boy here. He knows all about the Navy.

JAMES
I don't know. I thought they'd listen to us.
BUDDY BOY
They can't do nothing if we stick together. They's too many of us. Just like in Detroit when we had the sitdown.

WENDELL
We just got to stick together.

LAMAR
Oh, we stuck together, all right. We glued together. God damn it, there's no air!

He pushes his way to the door, which has been closed, and flings it open. A MARINE GUARD appears in the doorway.

MARINE GUARD
What do you think you're doing?

LAMAR
Getting some air.

MARINE GUARD
I got orders to keep this door shut.

LAMAR
You can't breathe down here!

MARINE GUARD
Tough shit.

He closes the door. Lamar hits it in frustration.

JAMES
watches him closely.

EXT. THE BARGE - NIGHT
Marine guards patrol the deck and the outside perimeter.

INT. THE BARGE - NIGHT
The men asleep on the floor, or trying to sleep, still in their work clothes, crowded together. James is awakened by the SOUND of angry voices outside. He looks around; no Lamar. He gets up quietly and goes outside.
EXT. THE BARGE - NIGHT

Lamar is arguing with the Marine guard he had argued with before as James comes out.

LAMAR
Why can't I sleep on deck? I ain't getting off--

MARINE GUARD
Look. Don't give me no trouble again, okay? Just get your ass back down there. Okay? Before I blow it off.

Lamar looks as if he will attack the guard, who brings up his rifle, ready to shoot, and James steps forward and takes Lamar by the arm. His voice to the guard is deferential, different from his ordinary voice, more Southern and placatory.

JAMES
He don't mean nothing, sir. He just gets upset when he gets closed in like that. Nothing he can help.

Lamar throws him off and speaks to the guard.

LAMAR
Look, you cracker moron--

MARINE GUARD
Who you calling--

LAMAR
I asked you polite!

MARINE GUARD
I'll blow your fucking head off!

JAMES
(conciliatory)
Ain't no need for that. Him and me, we going right back down. Ain't we, Lamar?

Another GUARD comes up, rifle at the ready.

SECOND MARINE
They giving you trouble, Harry?

MARINE GUARD
(points to Lamar)
This son of a bitch, calling me--

(CONTINUED)
JAMES
No trouble, sir—

SECOND MARINE
Shoot the nigger. He was trying to escape, wasn’t he?

LAMAR
Why don’t I take that gun away from you and shove it up your ass?

The guard’s gun comes up, aiming at Lamar, and James hastily steps between them. He speaks quickly and smoothly, as though he has performed this act many times before.

JAMES
Lamar’s got a big mouth on him, don’t you, Lamar? Blows off sometimes, he don’t really mean what he’s saying. Gets him in all sorts of scrapes.
(takes Lamar’s arm again)
Let’s get some shuteye, Lamar.

LAMAR
(grimly)
I can’t—

JAMES
Sure you can. I’ll see you get enough room. You’ll have a real good sleep. Come on, now.

He leads a reluctant Lamar away, smiling back at the guards.

JAMES
You been right patient, gentlemen. Thank you. He won’t be doing this again.

SECOND MARINE
He better not.

MARINE GUARD
And I ain’t no cracker. I’m from Connecticut.

James keeps smiling as he goes inside with Lamar.

80 INT. THE BARGE = NIGHT

as they come in, the smile disappears and James points to a spot by the door.
JAMES
Come on, we can make some room over here.
There's air coming in through the cracks.

They sit against the door. Neither speaks. In the darkness, a man cries out in his sleep. Lamar looks over at James, who sits rigid against the wall. James' face is tight, unusual for him.

LAMAR
You don't like it no better in here than me.

JAMES
It ain't that.

LAMAR
(after a moment)
It's playing the fool, ain't it?
(James is silent)
Navy ain't no different, James. Don't matter there's a war on--

JAMES
(stubbornly)
It is different. We got a chance here.

LAMAR
Here?
(looks around the room)
Like one of them old slave ships in here. They got us right where they want us.

JAMES
Except we ain't slaves. And those crackers ain't the Navy, not the whole Navy. I been dealing with that trash all my life, they don't bother me--

Lamar takes James' arm and holds it out. James' hand is trembling, but he pulls it quickly away and changes the subject.

JAMES
How you feeling? You breathing all right?

LAMAR
Yeah, I'm fine.
(laughs)
Reminds me the time I got locked in a boxcar. Hopped this big old freight outside of Denver, car full of I don't know what it was... hay, straw, stuff
(MORE)
Like that. And it was cold outside, real cold. Mountain cold, like you'd piss and it'd freeze before it hit the ground. But I bedded down in that stuff and it was real nice and warm except you couldn't breathe too good. And after a while, you couldn't hardly breathe at all. Seemed like I was using up all the air. So I tried to slide back the door a little... damned thing wouldn't move. Sealed up tight as a drum. Well, I started banging on that door, yelling out... holding my breath so I wouldn't use up the air. Goddamnest situation I ever been in. I mean, I was gonna die right in there.

He chuckles again as if none of this had bothered him and still doesn't, holding back how it had really felt.

JAMES
How'd you get out?

LAMAR
Railroad bull heard me.

JAMES
You sure were lucky.

LAMAR
Spent a month on the chain gang.

JAMES
Better than dying.

LAMAR
Not by much.

JAMES
(reassuringly)
Well, no need to worry now. We got enough air to breathe and tomorrow they'll let us out.

LAMAR
(after a moment)
James...

JAMES
Yeah?

(Continued)
LAMAR
You know ... the bright side ain't always
the right side.

James doesn't answer. He leans back against the door and
arranges himself for sleep. Lamar sits there, awake. He holds
his own hand out. It trembles slightly. He holds it, willing
it to be still, until the trembling finally stops. He takes a
depth breath.

INT. THE BARGE - DAWN

Most of the men asleep. A whistle blows outside and the SOUND
of the CPO's voice is heard.

PETTY OFFICER
Everybody up! Up, up, up! Outside on
the double! Everybody! Out!

James and Lamar move away from the door as the CPO flings it
open. Lamar is the first one out. The other men stir
themselves and start to move out after him.

EXT. THE BARGE - DAWN

as the men raggedly assemble. Lamar is taking huge gulps of
air. The CPO barks commands and marches the men off the
barge. The Marine guards march alongside, rifles at the
ready.

EXT. A MESS HALL - DAWN

as the men march by. A few WHITE SAILORS stand outside,
picking their teeth. Some still hold cups of coffee. Others
are going in. They stare at the black sailors passing.

ODELL
Ain't that the mess hall?

WENDELL
Yeah.

The men are puzzled that this isn't where they are going.

EXT. A LOW BUILDING - DAWN

The black sailors are directed inside.
INT. THE BUILDING - DAWN

It is a large, empty room with long tables and a kitchen setup at one end. The men are still puzzled as the CPO addresses them.

PETTY OFFICER
Okay, this is where you'll eat.
(pointing)
There's the kitchen, there's the food. You cook it yourselves. And you clean it up when you're finished. I mean, clean. So you could eat off the floor.

ODELL
(protesting)
But we ain't cooks.

PETTY OFFICER
Then you don't eat.
(looks at his watch)
You got thirty minutes.

He goes out. The guards remain. The men mutter and then head for the food. There is jostling, angry words.

JAMES
There's going to be trouble.

LAMAR
Good.

EXT. THE BARGE - MORNING

The men march up and start filing in again. The guards take up their places outside.

INT. THE BARGE - MORNING

The men are angry at being jammed in there again. James and Lamar take their places against the door.

JAMES
It ain't fair.

Lamar just looks at him. James' face is set.
JAMES
What they're doing to us ... it ain't fair.

LAMAR
(incredulous)
It ain't fair? I hear you right, James? Fair? You expecting fair? You change color all of a sudden?

JAMES
It ain't like we're civilians, they can do what they want. We're in the military. We got a right to be treated fair.

LAMAR
You got no rights, country boy. Like in the song ... you in the Navy now, you ain't behind the plow. Smarten up and figure it out.

JAMES
You think I'm stupid--

LAMAR
You ain't stupid, James, you just ignorant. You think it all going to be different on account of there's a war on?

JAMES
(simply)
Yes.

LAMAR
Well, I take it back. You ain't just ignorant, you stupid.

Some men start yelling at each other. A few want to go back to work, even loading ammunition, anything to get out of here. Others are warning them not to.

JAMES
Army.

LAMAR
(watching the quarrel)
What?

JAMES
The song's about the Army. You're in the Army now, you're not behind the plow.
The argument about returning to work escalates and turns into a fight. Other men break it up. The mood is angry and fearful.

88 INT. THE BARGE - NIGHT
The men asleep or trying to sleep. James and Lamar against the door. This time, Lamar restlessly sleeps. James sits with his eyes open. Trying to deal with his mixed-up thoughts.

89 EXT. THE BARGE - DAWN
as the men file out. The CPO marches them off.

90 EXT. THEIR MESS HALL - DAWN
They are marched inside.

91 EXT. THE BARGE - MORNING
They are herded back inside again.

92 INT. THE BARGE - MORNING
Immediately after. A tumult of angry voices. The men very close to rioting. Some have smuggled knives from the mess hall and spoons which they are twisting into knives. James grabs Lamar.

JAMES
You got to stop this--

LAMAR
Let's show them we won't take this shit.

JAMES
Those guards outside--

LAMAR
Just let them try--

(CONTINUED)
JAMES
They got bullets in those guns. They'll use any excuse ... shoot a few niggers, what do they care? You got to calm the guys down. Get their attention ... tell them what can happen. You're the leader, Lamar, they'll listen to you.

(urgently)
Get them to cool it.

LAMAR
(shouts suddenly)
Cool it!!

Surprised, the men quiet down. Lamar turns to James, grinning, surprised and pleased at his effect on the men. James pushes a box forward and Lamar steps up on it and addresses them.

LAMAR
You acting like a bunch of assholes. Just like they want us to act. Those guards just looking for an excuse to shoot them some niggers. They want us to make trouble... act like animals, give them an excuse. They'd sure like that, wouldn't they? But we ain't animals and we ain't giving them no excuse. Right? Right! So knock it off.

MAN
(calls out)
How long they gonna keep us here?

LAMAR
No matter. We got the Navy by the balls. We don't do nothing to them, they can't do nothing to us. So keep it cool, you hear? Keep a lid on it. We don't want no more trouble than we already got. Okay? Okay!

He laughs, now imitating the CPO.

LAMAR
Dissss ... missed!

The tension is broken. Some of the men applaud as Lamar steps down. James nods approvingly.

(CONTINUED)
JAMES
You did good, Lamar.

LAMAR
I'm good with bullshit, James. Don't you know that yet?

He walks away. Men surround him, seeking his counsel.

INT. THE BARGE - NIGHT

Fewer of the men are sleeping. The atmosphere is even more tense, full of suppressed anger and fear. Lamar and James sit awake against the door.

LAMAR
James ...

JAMES
Yeah?

LAMAR
You know that place where we eat?

JAMES
What about it?

LAMAR
There's a door in the back.

JAMES
There's a door in the front, too.

LAMAR
Out that back door, ten steps and you're over the fence.

JAMES
(turns to him)
You mean, over the hill--

LAMAR
(nods)
All of us in there, nobody's going to notice. Those cracker guards can't keep an eye on everyone.

JAMES
You serious? Sometimes with you, I can't never tell.

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
Come along and see.

JAMES
Man, you think you're in the shithouse now, you go over the hill--
(shakes his head)
They'd pick you up in a minute and a half.

LAMAR
Not where I'd go. Hop a freight ...
Chicago, New York--
(sings)
Bye, Bye, Blackbird.

JAMES
(choosing to joke)
But you the big man here, Lamar. What we going to do, you fly off like some skinny-assed bird?

LAMAR
You gonna do what you got to do. Want to come?

JAMES
No. I ain't coming and you ain't going.

LAMAR
You telling on me?

JAMES
No.
(indicates the other men)
They're why you ain't going.

LAMAR
They gonna stop me?

JAMES
You gonna stop yourself. On account of you are caught, Lamar. Caught by something you don't think you even got.

LAMAR
What?

JAMES
You know.

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
I know what? What the hell you talking about, I don't think I even got?

JAMES
A conscience.

LAMAR
You don't think I got a conscience.

JAMES
That ain't what I said. I think you got a conscience. You the one don't think you got a conscience.

LAMAR
Everybody's got a conscience. You think I never had no schooling? You are born with a conscience, it comes with the goddammed territory, so don't tell me I don't got one.

JAMES
(wearily)
That ain't what I said.

LAMAR
Yeah, but it's what you meant.

There is a pause.

LAMAR
(with certainty)
They don't let us out of this rathole, I'm going.

JAMES
Good.

LAMAR
Oh? How come now I'm going? What happened to caught?

JAMES
I just know they got to let us out.

LAMAR
Want to bet?

JAMES
Yes.

(CONTINUED)
He looks confidently at Lamar.

EXT. THE BARGE - EARLY MORNING

as the men file out, disoriented. Waiting for them this time are De Marco and Hollister along with the CPO. De Marco looks them over with distaste.

DE MARCO
You're a sorry-looking bunch, aren't you?
(sniffs)
Stink, too. Had enough in there? Well, you're in luck. You could be getting another chance.

JAMES
(smiles at Lamar)
Pay up.

LAMAR
We didn't say how much.

DE MARCO
Somebody very important wants to talk to you.

EXT. A BASEBALL DIAMOND - MORNING

CLOSE on Admiral Wright.

WRIGHT
In case you don't remember, my name is Admiral Wright and I am the commandant of the Twelfth Naval District. When I spoke to you before, I was proud of you. Now ... the way you're behaving ...

The ANGLE WIDENS to show Wright standing in a jeep addressing the men. They are arranged in a U-formation, guarded by rifle-carrying Marines.

WRIGHT
They tell me some of you men want to go to sea. I believe that's a goddamned lie. I don't believe any of you have enough guts to go to sea. I hear you're too scared to handle ammunition. Well, I've been handling ammunition for thirty years and I'm still here. I have a healthy

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
WRIGHT (cont'd)

respect for ammunition. Anyone who
doesn't is crazy. But that's a lot
different than refusing to do your job.
Disobeying a direct order. That's mutiny.
And I want to remind you men that
mutinous conduct in time of war carries
the death sentence. Do you understand?
The death sentence. Carried out by firing
squad. You ready for that? Because,
believe me, facing a firing squad is a lot
worse than handling ammunition.

THE MEN

as they react to this, stunned by the threat, There are
murmurs of disbelief. A few affect a false bravado. A few
fight back tears. But all are deeply shaken.

JAMES
(to Lamar)

They can't do this. We didn't do no
mutiny. They can't--

LAMAR

They just did.

WRIGHT

Finishing his talk.

WRIGHT

So you've got a choice here. Go back to
work or face the consequences. I just
told you what's waiting for you. The
decision is up to you.

He sits back down in the jeep, nods to the driver and they
drive off. De Marco takes over in front of the men.

DE MARCO

Time's a-wasting, boys. You heard the
Admiral. What he says, he means. You're
lucky he's giving you a break.
(points to one side)
All you men willing to go back to work
step over there. Now.

THE MEN

(CONTINUED)
Torn, conflicted, frightened anew by what they now think can happen to them. They mutter among themselves, wanting not to believe, but unsure, cowed by the threat.

ODELL
What we ought to do, Lamar?

WENDELL
Maybe we ought to go back. Loading ammo, we got a chance. We don't got no chance with a firing squad.

BUDDY BOY
They sure looking to kill us one way or the other.

ODELL
Well, one way's for sure. What you going to do, Lamar?

BUDDY BOY
Shove it up their ass, that's what.

WENDELL
You talking death sentence, man.

BUDDY BOY
They can't shoot all of us.

WENDELL
They can shoot one of me and that's enough.

BUDDY BOY
Long as we stick together--

ODELL
I'll do what you do, Lamar.

They are all looking at Lamar, who looks at De Marco, at the armed guards, then back to the waiting men. He smiles faintly.

LAMAR
Got to know when to fold your hand, Odell.

He starts over to the other side. The others drift after him, some of them uncertain, some openly weeping, but willing to follow Lamar.

Except for James.
LAMAR

pauses to look back at James, expecting him to follow.

JAMES
does not move. He stands very straight, his face set.

DE MARCO

speaks to the men who have not moved.

DE MARCO
You boys are dumber than you look. You think you're scared now? Just wait till they put that blindfold on.

Some of the men break at this and hasten to the work group. The rest remain, among them James who is in the forefront. De Marco singles him out.

DE MARCO
You still too scared to work, boy?

JAMES
No, sir. I mean, I'm scared, but that ain't the reason.

DE MARCO
Oh?
(to Hollister)
This boy's got reasons.

JAMES
Yes, sir. It ain't right sending us back without no leave and nothing changed. But that ain't the only reason. We didn't do no mutiny, sir. It ain't fair saying we did.

DE MARCO
You disobeyed an order in time of war--

JAMES
Even if we did, that ain't mutiny.
DE MARCO (to Hollister)
What do you know, we got a sea lawyer here.
(to James)
What's your name, Counselor?

JAMES

DE MARCO
Well, Dawkins, the Navy says it's mutiny, it's mutiny. You don't tell the Navy what's the law. You clear about that?

JAMES
If it ain't right, it don't matter it's the Navy. It still ain't right.

DE MARCO
You got a mouth on you, don't you, boy?
(to them all)
Now, listen up. You're lucky I've got a soft heart. I'm going to give you all one more chance. You going back to work?

None of the men moves. De Marco motions to the guards and indicates the forty-four men.

DE MARCO
Take these men to the brig.

MARINE GUARD
Yes, sir.

DE MARCO
(to James)
I'll remember you, Dawkins.

James does not answer. The men are marched away under guard.

LAMAR

watches them go, shaking his head.

LAMAR
Stupid ... stupid, James. Stupid!
INT. A CELL BLOCK - DAY

The resisting men are herded into a holding cell. The door is slammed shut after them. Most of the men are a combination of fear and defiance. James stands by the bars, looking out.

EXT. 12TH NAVAL DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS - DAY

LT. GERALD VELTMANN walks briskly up a path and enters the building. He is a young, lean, non-military Texan.

INT. ADMIRAL WRIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY

Wright sits behind his desk. Facing him are Goss, De Marco and LT. CMDR. COAKLEY. He looks up as Veltmann enters and salutes.

VELTMANN

WRIGHT
(Returns the salute)
Glad to have you aboard, Veltmann.
(indicates the others)
Captain Goss, he's in charge of Port Chicago ordnance. Lt. De Marco, commanding the Fourth Division. And you probably know Joe Coakley from civilian life.

VELTMANN
(shaking hands)
Only by reputation. You put away some real bad ones, sir.

COAKLEY
Well, I was working for a great D.A. Earl Warren - the best.

WRIGHT
Coakley's prosecuting the mutineers, you're defending. I don't envy you, it's a mess. Any objections?

VELTMANN
Can't think of any.

WRIGHT
Good. Now, anything you two can do to speed this up will be appreciated.

(CONTINUED)
COAKLEY
Plead them guilty, that's the speediest.

VELTMANN
I haven't even met with them yet.

WRIGHT
This thing has got to go by the book. President Roosevelt knows about it already. He's agreed to a summary court for the men who promised to work - thinks their sentences should be nominal, but we'll decide that.

VELTMANN
Excuse me, sir. You're court-martiailling those other men?

EXT. A LINE OF WAITING TRUCKS - DAY
The remaining men grouped before them, facing Hollister with an angry chorus of stunned disbelief.

VOICES
For what? Why? Why us? We the ones going back to work! Why they going to court martial us?

INT. WRIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY
as before.

WRIGHT
They disobeyed a direct order.

GOSS
You want to give them a medal?

EXT. THE TRUCKS - DAY
Lamar in the forefront.

LAMAR
We didn't disobey no order. We said we'd work. We'll load the goddamned ammo.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

BUDDY BOY
You think it's right?

HOLLISTER
(wearily)
It doesn't matter what I think. Get in the truck.

LAMAR
It ain't fair.

INT. WRIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY
as before.

GOSS
You're dealing with men of low mentality here, Lieutenant. They've got to be disciplined. Only thing they understand.

EXT. THE STOCKADE - DAY
as the trucks, full of the men, drive through the gate and into the prison.

INT. WRIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY
as before.

COAKLEY
What about the men who mutinied? What did the President say about them?

VELTMANN
We don't know that yet.

WRIGHT
Know what?

VELTMANN
That they mutinied.

COAKLEY
Oh, come on--
VELTMANN
(mildly)
I thought that's why we're trying them. To find out.

COAKLEY
Face it, Veltmann, it's cut and dried--

WRIGHT
Save your arguments for the courtroom. The President didn't say a thing about them. I hear he passed it on to Eleanor.

GOSS
Well, batten down the hatches. Here come the bleeding hearts.

WRIGHT
That's why I want this trial to be quick. Quick and clean.
(to Veltmann)
No stalling. No legal foolishness. None of your New York tricks.

VELTMANN
I'm from Texas, sir.

WRIGHT
You're still a lawyer. You want the truth, I don't like lawyers. I'm a sailor. I like it plain and to the point.
(indicates De Marco)
Lt. De Marco will help you any way he can. He knows what those men were planning.

VELTMANN
Planning?

GOSS
There was a conspiracy. Agitators, ringleaders among them ... subversives--

VELTMANN
(to De Marco)
You know that for a fact?

DE MARCO
Well--
COAKLEY
(stepping in)
You'll find that out at the trial.

WRIGHT
One more thing. There's going to be a lot of publicity on this one. The Navy wants it that way - show there's no discrimination here, this isn't some kind of kangaroo court. We want this to be an example.

GOSS
So no other bunch of niggers gets the same idea.

Everyone looks at him, Wright holding his look until Goss begins to squirm.

WRIGHT
(quietly)
That's not the kind of example I mean, Captain.

GOSS
(uncomfortable)
Well, sure, of course--

WRIGHT
We're going to have reporters, the NAACP poking their nose in ... Mrs. Roosevelt ... they're going to try to make the Navy look bad. We're not going to let them. Understood?

COAKLEY
Don't worry, sir. We've got an airtight case.

WRIGHT
You'd better have.

EXT. THE BASE - DAY

The men who agreed to work are doing clean-up duty: picking up pieces of paper, cigarette butts, other odds and ends. A Guard monitors them. They wear jumpsuits with a large P on their backs.

LAMAR

(CONTINUED)
works slowly, hanging back. His attention is on the chain link fence that encloses the compound.

GUARD
(noticing this)
What you looking at, sailor?

LAMAR
(jokingly)
Just looking how to escape, that's all.

GUARD
(laughs)
Keep dreaming.

Lamar laughs with him and moves on.

EXT. THE STOCKADE - DAY

The men sit on the ground, waiting in a line that leads to a door. Lamar, Wendell and Buddy Boy are at the head of the line. The CAMERA MOVES DOWN the line to the door.

INT. A VISITING ROOM - DAY

De Marco is interrogating a worried Odell.

DE MARCO
You're not getting a summary court, Odell. You're getting a General Court Martial. That's seven and a half to fifteen ... hard labor.

ODELL
I don't know nothing but what I told you.

DE MARCO
There was a plan and there was a leader--

ODELL
No, sir. Least not that I knowed about.

DE MARCO
You know what perjury is, Odell?

ODELL
I ain't lying, sir.

(CONTINUED)
That's for the court to decide. You're in trouble, Odell, but you're one of my boys and I'm here to help you. Now... what was the plan and who was the leader?

Odell fidgets, his face distressed.

DE MARCO
You want to tell me something?

ODELL
Yes, sir.

(De Marco waits, expectant)

I got to go to the bathroom, sir. Bad.

DE MARCO
(sighs)
Send in the next man.

ODELL
Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

He salutes and hurries out. After a moment, Lamar comes in. De Marco smiles at him.

DE MARCO
How you doing, Lamar?

LAMAR
Can't complain, sir.

DE MARCO
Sure you can. They don't treat you right, just let me know.

LAMAR
Well, I asked for a hacksaw, they just laughed at me. Civilian clothes, bus fare to Oakland--

DE MARCO
(laughs)
Glad to see you still have a sense of humor. You tell anyone about our little arrangement?

LAMAR
You mean, the bets I helped you win? Speeding up the men? That arrangement?

(CONTINUED)
DE MARCO
(sharply)
You tell anyone?

LAMAR
I don't tell on people, sir.

DE MARCO
Don't shit me, Lamar. I've seen you in action. Something in it for you, you'd turn in your mother.

LAMAR
I ain't got a mother.
(De Marco waits)
I didn't tell nobody.

DE MARCO
You sure?

LAMAR
(shrugs)
No point telling. Me against you - who'd they believe?

DE MARCO
(smiles)
That's good thinking. Very good. You're a smart boy, Lamar.

LAMAR
Yes, sir. I know.

DE MARCO
Now, we can go ahead with our deal.

The lightness goes out of De Marco's voice as he gets to the point.

DE MARCO
We know there was some kind of conspiracy among you boys ... somebody stirring you up, planning this mutiny--

LAMAR
There wasn't no plan. It just happened. Everyone was scared.

DE MARCO
There was a conspiracy. I want to know who planned it.
LAMAR
Nobody planned nothing—

DE MARCO
Every company has a few troublemakers, like to shoot off their mouth. That boy, Dawkins—

LAMAR
James?

DE MARCO
I hear he's a friend of yours.

LAMAR
(laughs)
You picking the wrong horse. That boy is one hundred percent Navy.

DE MARCO
He mutinied.

LAMAR
He stupid, that's all. James ain't no troublemaker. He too peaceful for his own good.

De Marco looks at him for a moment. His voice is friendly again.

DE MARCO
The deal, Lamar. Remember? You give me something, I give you something.

LAMAR
(shrugs)
Can't give you what I don't got.

DE MARCO
Maybe you just don't know you got it. Happens to me all the time. Can't remember something and then all of a sudden, right out of nowhere ... pop goes the weasel!
(smiles)
Who knows? Maybe that could happen to you. While you're waiting for the court martial.

He continues to smile as the CAMERA MOVES IN on Lamar's face which slowly DISSOLVES into the face of James. The SOUND of Veltmann's voice is heard.
VELTMANN
(voice over)
If I may cite Winthrop's Military Law and Precedents ... mutiny is defined as "unlawful opposition or resistance to, or defiance of, superior military authority with a deliberate purpose to usurp, subvert or override the same."

109 INT. A HOLDING CELL - DAY

James MOVING AWAY from the CAMERA as we see him in the cramped cell with the other so-called mutineers. One of the YOUNGER SAILORS holds his head in his hands, not wanting to show the others that he is crying. James sits down next to him and puts his arm around the boy's shoulders, comforting him. The SOUND of Veltmann's voice continues.

VELTMANN
(voice over)
In other words, a mutiny is active revolt with the intent of taking over command. By that - or indeed any other - standard, these men did not commit mutiny. At worst, they committed a work stoppage, a strike. By no means - not morally, not reasonably and certainly not legally - can they be charged with mutiny and put on trial for their lives.

110 INT. A COURTROOM - DAY

A large room with a long table at one end, tables and chairs for lawyers and witnesses and rows of now-empty chairs for spectators and the accused. Veltmann and Coakley stand before the seven-man panel of NAVAL OFFICERS which will be the court. Presiding is ADMIRAL OSTERMAN: elderly, short-tempered and officious. Next to him is an officer not of the court: LT. GREGHART.

VELTMANN
I therefore request that the charge of mutiny against these men be dismissed.

OSTERMAN
Commander Coakley?

(CONTINUED)
COAKLEY
The prosecution will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that there was a concerted, premeditated conspiracy to subvert the command of the Fourth Division. We have signed statements to that effect from the men themselves—

OSTERMANN
Fine, fine, in that case let's go to trial. You've been arguing this for two weeks now—

VELTMANN
Your Honor—

OSTERMANN
Your what?

VELTMANN
(repenting)
Sorry, sir—

OSTERMANN
I'm tired of telling you. How long have you been in the Navy?

VELTMANN
Since Pearl Harbor—

OSTERMANN
And how do you address this court in the Navy?

VELTMANN
As Admiral Osterman, sir.

OSTERMANN
Just plain Admiral will do. Or Mr. President. Not - I repeat - not "Your Honor". We'll have none of that civilian crap in here.

VELTMANN
I'll try to be more careful, sir. But we still haven't addressed my argument on the merits.

Osterman considers this. He leans towards Greghart, who whispers in his ear. Osterman nods and turns back to Veltmann.
OSTERMAN
I think we have. We'll judge the rest of its merits in a trial. You two ready to start?

Coakley and Veltmann speak simultaneously.

COAKLEY
Yes, sir.

VELTMANN
No, sir.

OSTERMAN
(to Veltmann)
Now, what's your problem?

VELTMANN
Those so-called statements--

COAKLEY
There's nothing so-called about them--

VELTMANN
--were obtained without those men having benefit of counsel. As a matter of fact, many of the men thought the officers questioning them were their defense lawyers.

COAKLEY
The prosecution can't be held responsible for the stupidity of the defendants.

VELTMANN
They were tricked and coerced. Armed guards were present--

COAKLEY
Armed guards are always present in the brig. Normal procedure.

VELTMANN
Those statements are inadmissible! No court in the country would allow them.

OSTERMAN
Calm yourself, Lieutenant.

VELTMANN
Sorry, sir, but--
OSTERMAN
You have evidence of coercion?

VELTMANN
The armed guards--

OSTERMAN
Normal Navy procedure is not evidence. You've had enough time, Lieutenant. Be ready to go to trial.
(raps his gavel)
Court dismissed.

He and the other officers stand. Veltmann and Coakley salute them as they file off. Veltmann indicates Greghart, who leaves last.

VELTMANN
Who is that guy? He's not one of the judges.

COAKLEY
Greghart? Had a nice practice in Sacramento. Did a lot of real estate.

VELTMANN
What's he doing here?

COAKLEY
You just saw. They dragged Osterman out of retirement for this one. Greg's here to help him remember the law.

VELTMANN
You mean, to tell him what he can get away with.

COAKLEY
(smiles)
You know, Gerry, when you said no court in the country would allow those statements--

VELTMANN
They wouldn't.

COAKLEY
You keep forgetting. You're not in the country. You're in the Navy.

He goes off, smiling.
EXT. THE BASE - DAY

The prisoners at work policing the area. Lamar is among them, although hanging back in the rear. The Guard watches them without interest, his mind elsewhere. They come to the building where the men had been sent from the barge to eat. Lamar watches the Guard.

LAMAR'S POV - THE GUARD

looking away.

THE PRISONERS

pass the building, continuing to work. Lamar is no longer to be seen. The Guard does not notice.

EXT. THE REAR OF THE BUILDING - DAY

The door opens and Lamar slips out. He moves swiftly to the fence and climbs over, disappearing in the underbrush.

EXT. THE BACKYARD OF A HOUSE - DAY

A family's clothes and bedding hang peacefully drying on clotheslines. Suddenly, a man's pair of pants and a shirt are yanked off by someone unseen. After a moment, they are carefully replaced by Lamar's jumpsuit with its large P on the back.

INT. A LARGE PRISON ROOM - DAY

Split down the middle by a wire barrier and divided into cubicles. Seated in each cubicle is a BLACK MAN or WOMAN, relative or friend of an accused. They are worried, nervous, not knowing what to expect. The door opens and several of the accused mutineers are led in by ARMED GUARDS. Each goes to a cubicle and sits opposite his visitor. James sits opposite his FATHER, whose look is grim and judgmental.

JAMES

Hello, Daddy.

His father nods. There is a pause.

(CONTINUED)
JAMES
(lightly)
You want to know how I'm doing. Pretty good. Food ain't too bad, meat every day. They ain't being too hard on us. We get out in the yard, throw a ball around--

FATHER
Why you did this, James?

JAMES
They wasn't doing right by us, Daddy. They wasn't being fair.

FATHER
What you mean, fair? You in the military. You follow orders.

JAMES
I just done what I been taught--

FATHER
Not by me--

JAMES
You taught me--

FATHER
To get along! Not make no trouble with white people. Look at you now, look what you done ... you done a fool thing! Mutiny!

He stops, aware that he has raised his voice. The word mutiny reverberates through the room, stopping conversation.

JAMES
(quietly)
That what you come to tell me, Daddy?

FATHER
(after a moment)
You looked so fine in that uniform. Even had your picture in the newspaper.
(fumbles in his pocket)
I got the clipping here. See? "Local Negro Joins U.S.Navy."
(shows it)
Your Momma got it all framed up on the wall.

(CONTINUED)
JAMES
I ain't done nothing to put a disgrace on that uniform.

FATHER
You in prison--

JAMES
How many you know in prison that don't deserve?

His father is silent. They both look to where one of the younger sailors has started to weep. His mother reaches through the wire to comfort him.

FATHER
I talked to a lawyer down home ... Mr. Hardwick? Big, red-headed fella, you remember. Always nice to the colored. He says maybe you got a chance to get out of here. Just tell them you sorry, you ready to go back to work now, ready to cooperate--

JAMES
What's that mean, cooperate?

FATHER
Tell them about the mutiny and--

JAMES
There wasn't no mutiny--

FATHER
--who was behind it--

JAMES
I'd have to make that up. That what you want me to do, Daddy? Tell on people, save my own skin--

FATHER
You looking at a firing squad!

JAMES
(agreeably)
Okay.

FATHER
(taken aback)
You'll do that?

(CONTINUED)
JAMES
If I can get out of here.

His father looks at him. James seems totally sincere.

FATHER
How can you do that?

JAMES
Ain't nothing to it. Give them a couple of names ...
(points to a sailor)
Like him over there. He's so dumb, he don't know up from down. Won't even know what hit him. Easy as pie.

FATHER
You can't do that.

JAMES
Why not?

FATHER
Because you can't, that's all. You just can't, not you. Telling on people didn't do nothing--

JAMES
But you just said--

FATHER
The lawyer said ... Mr. Hardwick--

JAMES
Then what do you want me to do?

His father doesn't answer for a moment, snared by his own morality. Then he sighs.

FATHER
What's right. I want you to do what's right.

JAMES
That's what you taught me.

FATHER
I taught you good, didn't I?
(wryly)
Too good for this damned world. (concerned)
Don't tell your Momma I cussed.

(CONTINUED)
JAMES
(softly)
I love you, Daddy.

FATHER
I love you, son.

James reaches through the wire and takes his father's hand. They stay that way as we hear the SOUND of a gavel rapping.

OSTERMAN
(voice over)
Order! This court will come to order!

INT. THE COURTROOM - DAY

Filled now: lawyers, Navy brass, the accused sailors sitting stiffly in the rear. Osterman and his panel of judges facing everyone. Greghart next to Osterman.

OSTERMAN
Will the defendants rise?
(the accused stand)
I'm going to ask each of you how you plead. Your answer will be either guilty or not guilty.
(reads from a paper)
Samuel Slipp.

SLIPP
(low)
Not guilty, sir.

OSTERMAN
Jefferson Gale.

GALE
(very young and scared)
Not guilty, sir.

OSTERMAN
James Dawkins.

JAMES
(firmly)
Not guilty.
EXT. A RAILROAD YARD - DAY

as Lamar in civilian clothes chases after a freight train lumbering out of the yard. He catches up to the train and tries to swing himself into an empty car. But the train is picking up speed and goes too fast for him. He tries again and again to keep up, tries to swing his legs up into the car, but can't do it. He finally lets go and watches helplessly at the train receding in the distance. He turns to walk off - and is clubbed to the ground by a vicious blow to the head.

A POLICEMAN

stands over him. In the b.g. is a police car with another policeman.

LAMAR

Dazed. Looks up at him.

EXT. THE BASE - DAY

A jeep drives along. In it are two SHORE PATROLMEN and a battered Lamar. They pass the prisoners policing the area, who stop to stare at Lamar. A few call out encouragement. Lamar waves back to them, summoning up his old cocky smile.

INT. DE MARCO'S OFFICE - DAY

He is working at his desk as the door opens and a Shore Patrolman ushers Lamar in. De Marco nods to the SP and he leaves, closing the door. Lamar stands there. De Marco indicates a chair.

DE MARCO

(friendly)
Have a chair, Lamar. You look like you can use it.

Lamar sits. De Marco looks him over sympathetically.

DE MARCO

Worked you over, didn't they? Need a medic?

(Lamar shakes his head)
Well, you sure fucked up good this time. You're in real deep shit, Lamar.

Desertion in time of war--

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
It wasn't desertion, it was AWOL. Lots of guys go over the hill, it ain't so serious--

DE MARCO
It's what the Navy says it is, Lamar. Don't you know that much, a smart boy like you? Right now, it's desertion. Lucky this isn't a combat zone, you'd be shot. But you're still looking at a federal pen.

LAMAR
Unless.

DE MARCO
What's that mean ... unless?

LAMAR
You ain't bringing me here, see I need a medic. Or tell me what I know. You still thinking deal.

DE MARCO
(laughs)
Got to hand it you, Lamar. You're like some cat always thinks it can land on its feet.

LAMAR
You want to tell me the deal? Sir.

DE MARCO
Who planned the mutiny?

LAMAR
No, that's what you want. You already told me that. What do I get? What you said, remember? I give you something, you give me something.

DE MARCO
Reduced charges.

LAMAR
How much reduced?

DE MARCO
(shrugs)
Not entirely up to me. You'll probably have to do some time--
LAMAR
(shakes his head)
Company punishment. That's all.

DE MARCO
You're not exactly in a position of strength, boy--

LAMAR
You want something, Lieutenant. You want it bad, else I wouldn't be here. I can give it to you.

DE MARCO
You got your memory back.

LAMAR
Yes, sir. Happened just like you said it would. Right out of nowhere.

DE MARCO
Pop went the weasel.

LAMAR
Yes, sir. Just like that. Pop.

He looks blandly at De Marco.

DE MARCO
No tricks, Lamar.

LAMAR
(sincerely)
I'm fresh out of trickery, sir.

DE MARCO
All right, then, who? The leader, the ringleader. I need a name.

LAMAR
Well, lots of those guys, I don't know their names--

DE MARCO
(sighs)
Lamar, please. Somebody planned the mutiny, gave the men the idea, organized it. You said you just remembered. Who?

LAMAR
I could maybe describe him--

(CONTINUED)
DE MARCO
Let me help you out. I mentioned this man to you before. Could it have been Dawkins? James Dawkins. He's got a big mouth, he was right up there in front. The men followed him. He was insolent--

LAMAR
James?

DE MARCO
You're stalling, Lamar.

LAMAR
No, sir, just trying to put a name to--

DE MARCO
Maybe I didn't make it clear. You deserted. You were caught. You will be tried and convicted. You will be sent away for a long, long time. Now. James Dawkins. Leader of the mutiny.

(Lamar is silent)
If it will ease your conscience, although I doubt you have one ... we already have Dawkins where he belongs. He and the rest of them ... they're going to be convicted.

LAMAR
Then why do you need--

DE MARCO
The nail in the coffin. Nothing left to chance. Take my word, Lamar, we need it. The newspapers are all over us. The lefties are out demonstrating - they're treating this like the goddamned Scottsboro case. We need absolute proof.

(a beat)
James Dawkins.

(another beat)
Yes or no?

LAMAR
He's going down anyway?

DE MARCO
You bet.

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
(a long moment)
Yes.

INT. THE COURTROOM - DAY

The trial in progress. An uncomfortable Hollister on the stand, Coakley cross-examining him.

COAKLEY
Most of the men agreed to return to work. Only the defendants refused, is that correct?

HOLLISTER
Yes, sir.

COAKLEY
They refused a direct order.

HOLLISTER
I guess so.

COAKLEY
You guess? You were there, weren't you? You heard Lt. De Marco give the order.

HOLLISTER
Well, he asked if they were willing to go back to work.

COAKLEY
And they refused.

HOLLISTER
Yes, sir.

COAKLEY
You don't consider that disobeying an order?

HOLLISTER
Well--

COAKLEY
If they had gone, that would have been obeying, would it not?
HOLLISTER
I suppose--

COAKLEY
Yes or no?

HOLLISTER
(reluctantly)
Yes.

COAKLEY
So if they refused, they disobeyed. Correct, Lieutenant?
(Hollister hesitates)
Correct?

HOLLISTER
(unhappily)
Correct.

Coakley turns away, nodding to Veltmann who comes forward.

VELTMANN
Why do you think they refused to work, Lieutenant?

HOLLISTER
They were scared.

VELTMANN
Because of the explosion?

HOLLISTER
Yes, sir.

VELTMANN
They were willing to do any other work, but not load ammunition.

COAKLEY
Objection. Irrelevant what else they were willing to do.

Veltmann looks at the judge's table, which sits on a raised platform.

VELTMANN'S POV - OSTERMAN AND GREGHART
He can see Greghart nudge Osterman's knee with his own.

THE COURT

(CONTINUED)
Osterman nods to Coakley.

OSTERMAN
Sustained. Stick to the point, Lieutenant.

VELTMANN
(to Hollister)
Mr. Hollister, I want you to think carefully here. Were the men ever given a direct order to load ammunition?

COAKLEY
Objection. The witness has already answered that.

VELTMANN
The witness has stated only that the men were asked if they were willing--

COAKLEY
He has stated they disobeyed--

VELTMANN
There was no direct order given and therefore these men cannot be guilty of disobeying.

He stops, looking again at Osterman and Greghart.

VELTMANN'S POV - OSTERMAN AND GREGHART
again, Greghart nudges Osterman's knee with his own.

THE COURT
Osterman takes the signal and nods again to Coakley.

OSTERMAN
Sustained. The order was clear and it was disobeyed. Proceed with your questioning.

VELTMANN
(seeing what he's up against)
No further questions.
CLOSE on a placard saying "FREE THE FIFTY!" The ANGLE WIDENS to show it carried by a YOUNG WOMAN walking in front of the gate. She is part of a group of DEMONSTRATORS, some of whom also carry placards denouncing the trial and racism in the Navy. A police car is parked nearby and two LOCAL POLICEMEN keep a bored eye on them.

A CAR drives up, the demonstrators parting to let it through, and the DRIVER leans out to speak to the SHORE PATROLMAN guarding the gate. He indicates the passenger in the back.

DRIVER
Thurgood Marshall to see Admiral Wright.

Marshall sits at a table with Wright, waiting for their lunch to be served, a drink before each of them. They are both very polite with each other.

WRIGHT
Did you have any problems getting a flight out? I know how hard civilian travel is these days--

MARSHALL
Oh, no problem at all. The Navy Department was kind enough to get me a special priority.

WRIGHT
You have better luck with them than I do.

MARSHALL
Well, it was actually Secretary Forrestal--

WRIGHT
Ah, yes.
Wright nods; he has taken Marshal's meaning; the man has access to high places. The WAITER comes with their food. He sets one plate before Wright and then the other before Marshall with a slight but unmistakable flourish. Marshall nods his thanks. The waiter nods in return. A certain contact has been made.

MARSHALL
(smiles)
Pays to have connections.

I'd like you to know, Admiral, that while the NAACP is very interested in this case - and as general counsel, I'm especially interested - I'm here strictly as an observer. I have no wish to interfere with how this trial is being conducted.

WRIGHT
I appreciate that, Mr. Marshall.

I've spoken with Lt. Veltmann and I think he's representing those men as well as anyone could.

WRIGHT
Lt. Veltmann is a very conscientious officer.

That said ...

He takes a bite of food and makes an appreciative face.

MARSHALL
This is delicious.

Thank you.
(pointedly)
That said--

My home town's famous for crab - Baltimore? Nothing like this, though.

You were saying?
MARSHALL
Of course, it's a different kind of crab. Much smaller. But very tasty. Makes great crab cakes. Do you like crab cakes, Admiral?

WRIGHT
I've never had them.

MARSHALL
You went to Annapolis and never had crab cakes? Surely, you must have gotten up to Baltimore--

WRIGHT
You had started to say something.

MARSHALL
Excuse me. Of course. Blame your good food for my wandering. About the trial. Yes.

(pleasantly)
I was hoping you could give me your thoughts on how the Navy could change its policy of giving Negro sailors only the dirtiest and most dangerous work.

WRIGHT
We were talking about the trial--

MARSHALL
It does have relevance--

WRIGHT
The trial, sir, is about mutiny. Those men--

MARSHALL
--are not the ones on trial. Oh, they are, of course, but not really. The Navy is on trial, Admiral. For its whole vicious policy towards Negroes.

WRIGHT
Mr. Marshall--

MARSHALL
The policy of your District restricts the use of Negro seamen, regardless of their experience and qualifications only to shore duty in segregated outfits and in the capacity of laborers.

(Continued)
WRIGHT
That is Navy policy.

MARSHALL
Yes. Excuse me again. I am not blaming you for Navy policy. But was it Navy policy - or was it your policy - after that terrible explosion - to give only white sailors emergency leave and not the surviving Negro men?

WRIGHT
You're out to get the Navy, aren't you?

Marshall does not answer at once. When he does, it's quietly.

MARSHALL
Last month, I argued a case before the Supreme Court. Three colored soldiers convicted of a rape they didn't commit. Maybe we'll win - we've got the law on our side. Although, in cases like that, when there's prejudice involved--

(shakes his head)
I don't have the power to get anyone, Admiral. All I've got is the law.

WRIGHT
Then I suggest you attend the trial.

WAITER
(coming up)
Are you finished, sir?

MARSHALL
Yes, thank you.

Wright nods. The waiter takes away the plates.

MARSHALL
I'm not out to get the Navy. Nor to get you. I've read your record ... Naval Academy, served on a destroyer in the first war, commanded a task force against the Japanese in this one.

(points to Wright's chest)
That's the Navy Cross, isn't it? For valor. I respect your service, Admiral. It was done for our country ... for all of us. But you're still part of a system ... a system that exploits, degrades and discriminates against Negroes. I want to change that system. It degrades all of us.
WRIGHT
(after a moment)
Would you like dessert?

EXT. THE STOCKADE - DAY

Lamar is led out by a Guard and marched to where the other prisoners are policing the area. His friends greet him with enthusiasm as he joins them in the work. He smiles in return, the old Lamar, not a care in the world.

INT. THE COURTROOM - DAY

as James watches the proceedings along with the other accused. Marshall is in the background, observing. The young sailor, Gale, is on the stand. He is still scared as Coakley cross-examines him.

COOKLEY
(holds up a paper)
You signed this statement.

GALE
Yes, sir. You say so.

COOKLEY
Your signature's on it, Seaman Gale. You swore that while you were all on the barge, there was already talk of mutiny.

GALE
I don't rightly know what I said, sir.

COOKLEY
Are you saying you lied?

GALE
I was so scared--

COOKLEY
But you didn't lie. That statement is the truth.

GALE
(confused)
I don't know. I don't know nothing no more.
COAKLEY
But you did sign the statement.

GALE
Yes, sir.

COAKLEY
(to Veltmann)
Your witness.

Veltmann approaches Gale. His manner is kind.

VELTMANN
When you signed that statement, you were in the brig.

GALE
Yes, sir.

VELTMANN
An officer was questioning you. Lt. De Marco. There was an armed guard standing by.

GALE
Yes, sir.

VELTMANN
Did Lt. De Marco threaten you in any way?

COAKLEY
Objection.

OSTERMAN
Sustained.

VELTMANN
Did Lt. De Marco say what would happen to you if you didn't sign this statement?

COAKLEY
Objection.

OSTERMAN
Sustained.

VELTMANN
Seaman Gale, how did you feel when you were being questioned?
GALE
Scared.

VELTMANN
Why? You weren't being abused, were you? Nobody hit you.

GALE
No, sir. Nobody laid a hand on me.

VELTMANN
Then why were you scared?

GALE
I been scared since the explosion.

VELTMANN
But this particular time ... when Lt. de Marco was questioning you ... what made you especially scared?

GALE
Because he said if I didn't sign the statement, I'd be shot.

CLOSE on MARSHALL
He nods as a murmur runs through the courtroom.

CLOSE on JAMES
He, too, nods.

CLOSE on De Marco.

DE MARCO
Of course not.

The ANGLE WIDENS to show him now on the stand.

DE MARCO
I never threatened Seaman Gale or any of the men I interrogated. They were scared, of course. I'd be scared, too, in their situation. But the statements they signed were entirely of their own free will.
He turns to Veltmann, who approaches De Marco. His question takes everyone by surprise.

VELTMANN
Lt. De Marco, you're married, aren't you?

COAKLEY
Objection. Whether the witness is married or single has nothing to do--

VELTMANN
I think it does, Admiral.

OSTERMAN
Well, you'd better show me how.

VELTMANN
(to De Marco)
Are you married?

DE MARCO
Yes.

VELTMANN
May I ask your wife's maiden name?

COAKLEY
Objection! This is completely irrelevant--

OSTERMAN
I'm tending to agree--

VELTMANN
I think the court will understand the relevance if the witness is allowed to answer the question.

OSTERMAN
(to De Marco)
Well, go ahead and answer. But make it quick.

VELTMANN
Your wife's maiden name?

DE MARCO
Coakley.
VELTMANN
And she is the sister of Lt. Commander Joseph P. Coakley who is the chief prosecutor of this trial? Is she not?
(De Marco hesitates)
Is she not Commander Coakley's sister?

A hubbub starts in the courtroom as De Marco nods.

COAKLEY
Objection! Irrelevant!

VELTMANN
(matching him in volume)
The testimony of this witness is tainted-

COAKLEY
It has nothing to do with the facts of this case--

VELTMANN
It has everything to do with it! Everything! The prosecution says these men disobeyed a direct order. They say no direct order was given. The prosecution says there was a conspiracy to commit mutiny. The men say there was no conspiracy and therefore no mutiny. Who are we to believe here? I submit that evidence from a man closely related to the prosecutor by marriage is tainted evidence and at the very least indicates collusion!

He stops, out of breath. The courtroom is still.

CLOSE on MARSHALL
He nods again, this time in approval.

CLOSE on JAMES
Waiting.

VELTMANN
looks at the judges.

VELTMANN'S POV - OSTERMAN AND GREGHART

(CONTINUED)
Greghart's knee again pokes at Osterman's. The Admiral bends towards Greghart, who whispers in his ear.

THE COURT

Osterman turns back to Veltmann.

OSTERMAN
Having a brother-in-law as a witness does not in itself invalidate a case. There is still the evidence to consider. However, the court will take the relationship into consideration.

VELTMANN
Thank you, sir.

OSTERMAN
The court will now adjourn until eight o'clock tomorrow morning.

The judges prepare to leave. Veltmann looks over at Marshall, who smiles at him and raises a thumb in encouragement.

DE MARCO
steps out of the witness chair and goes over to Coakley, who lowers his voice.

COAKLEY
I'm going to need your boy.

DE MARCO
You've got him.

EXT. THE STOCKADE - DAY

The prisoners are playing a pickup baseball game. Lamar plays third base and Buddy Boy is in the process of beating out a triple. He steams into third base and gives Lamar a triumphant smile as Lamar gets the throw too late. Lamar looks chagrined as he walks over to give the ball to the pitcher. He returns to third where Buddy Boy widens his grin as he takes a lead off the base. And Lamar promptly takes the hidden ball out of his glove, where he has secreted it, and tags Buddy Boy for the final out. Buddy Boy hops up and down in rage as Lamar's teammates crowd around to congratulate him.
ODELL
(crowing)
Ain't seen that since I seen Papa Bell
put that same trick on Josh Gibson!

WENDELL
You sure a slick one, Lamar.

BUDDY BOY
(smarting)
I still get credit for the triple.

But Lamar is looking O.S.

LAMAR'S POV - DE MARCO

He is looking at Lamar.

INT. THE HOLDING CELL - DAY

The prisoners standing or seated on the floor. They talk, try
to sleep or just stare into nothing. A few play cards. One of
the older men runs a three-card monte game, the men betting
matches instead of money.

The CAMERA SLOWLY PANS across the men as James' voice is
heard.

JAMES
(voice over)
Dear Daddy ... it looks like the trial is
finally going to end. Lt. Veltmann says
we have a good chance and I just hope he
is right. We are all holding up good
except for a few of the kids who miss
their Momma a lot just like I do.
Sometimes, when I can't sleep, I think of
Dorie Miller and what he went through.
Putting up with what he did and still
grabbing that gun and letting those Japs
have it. I think of what I said that day
at the graduation. I still believe that,
Daddy. We have to show them what Negroes
are capable of. Only it is hard when they
don't give you the chance. They make it
so you got to fight against your country
instead of for it.

The CAMERA HAS COME TO REST on James sitting in a corner, a
pad on his lap, writing the letter.
JAMES
(voice over)
But I guess you are fighting for it if you are fighting for what's right.
(pause)
I tell myself that when I can't sleep.

INT. THE COURTROOM - DAY
as the accused file in and sit down in the back. The Judges and opposing counsel are already there. Osterman raps with his gavel.

OSTERMAN
All right, let's weigh anchor and get underway. Mr. Coakley?

COAKLEY
Yes, sir. The prosecution calls Seaman Lamar Hamilton.

JAMES
reacts with surprise.

VELTMANN
Puzzled. Looks through his notes.

VELTMANN
I don't have any notice of this witness--

COAKLEY
He's been uncooperative until now, Admiral. There's been no intention to deceive.

OSTERMAN
Well, let's hear from him.

Coakley nods to a Guard, who opens a door. Lamar walks in. Coakley indicates the witness chair and Lamar sits.

JAMES
leans forward. Intent.
as Coakley begins the questioning.

COAKLEY

You were a member of the Fourth Division, correct?

LAMAR

Yes, sir.

COAKLEY

And after the Fourth Division refused to work - following the explosion - you were with them on the barge.

LAMAR

Yes, sir.

COAKLEY

(holds up some papers)

I have here signed statements from some of the seamen on that barge. They swear there was a conspiracy being formed during those three days. A plan to disobey orders ... in short, mutinous behavior. Were you aware of that?

LAMAR

Yes, sir.

JAMES

just shakes his head.

COAKLEY AND LAMA

Lamar calm, at ease.

COAKLEY

How were you aware?

LAMAR

There was talk.

COAKLEY

Were you asked to join in this conspiracy?

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
Yes, sir.

COAKLEY
Who asked you?

LAMAR
James Dawkins.

JAMES
continues shaking his head.

COAKLEY AND LAMAR
continuing.

COAKLEY
Can you tell us if Seaman Dawkins is here in this courtroom?

Lamar swivels in his chair. He looks over the accused men and points to James.

LAMAR
That's him.

He turns back to Coakley, who calls out.

COAKLEY
Stand up, Dawkins.
(James stands)
Is that the man?

LAMAR
(not looking at James)
Yes, sir.

OSTERMAN
Take another look, sailor. We have to be sure of this.

Lamar turns, gives James a quick glance, then turns back again.

LAMAR
He's the one.
COAKLEY
And how would you characterize Seaman Dawkin's role in this conspiracy?

LAMAR
I guess you could call him the leader. I mean, it was his idea. James hated the Navy, hated taking orders. One time I went up on deck looking to get some air and he followed me and picked this fight with the guards. Time I made that speech, trying to get the guys to calm down ... he was the one told me to tell them how we had the Navy by the balls. I mean, he's quiet, James, but he got all this hate going on underneath.

COAKLEY
Thank you.

He walks back to his seat, indicating to Veltmann that he's through with the witness.

VELTMANN
(to Ostermann)
The defense requests a brief recess.

INT. A SMALL OFFICE - DAY

VELTMANN confronting James.

VELTMANN
This was your friend? I can't wait till they get your enemies up there. Jesus, James--

JAMES
(calmingly)
They got to him.

VELTMANN
Well, he sure got to us. I put you on the stand, you deny it, who do you think they'll believe? They've got those phony statements, they want a conviction ... they need a conviction ... you're the final proof--
JAMES
Oh, they'll believe Lamar, all right.
He's great at that. Everyone always
believes Lamar.

VELTMANN
Then give me something, James ...
anything, I don't care how small, I'll
build it up. Did you ever do anything to
him, he wants to get even? A motive to
show bias--

JAMES
I did something once got him mad.

VELTMANN
What?

JAMES
Told him he had a conscience.

VELTMANN
Be serious. If I don't break him down--

JAMES
You won't. You got nothing to offer.

VELTMANN
What are you so damned calm about? He
just put a bullet in your heart!

He paces the room, angrily trying to think of something.

JAMES
(quietly)
Well, there's one thing might work.

Veltmann stops and looks at him.

VELTMANN
You sure?

JAMES
No, sir. But it's worth trying.

INT. THE COURTROOM - DAY

as James and Veltmann come in. James goes to the defense
table and stands there.
VEltmann

goesto speak softly to Ostermann. Coakley joins them. Their voices cannot be heard.

James

looks at Lamar, still in the witness chair.

Lamar

He does not look at James.

The Court

as the bench conference finishes and Veltmann and Coakley return to their respective tables.

Osterman

Just have him keep his mouth shut. Any disturbance and he goes back to the brig.

Veltmann nods agreement and motions for James to sit. James sits. Veltmann studies his papers for a moment, then walks around Lamar's chair so that, if Lamar looks at him, it is difficult to avoid also looking at James.

Veltmann

Lamar, have you been promised anything for this testimony?

Coakley

(immediately)

Objection.

Osterman

He can answer.

Lamar

(not looking at Veltmann)

No, sir.

Veltmann

(softly)

Lamar ...
LAMAR
Yes, sir.

VELTMANN
Look at me when you answer.

Lamar turns reluctantly to look at Veltmann, trying to avoid James, who is looking at him.

VELTMANN
You deserted two weeks ago and you were caught, is that correct?

LAMAR
I went over the hill, sir. I did not desert.

VELTMANN
Whatever you call it, the penalty is severe. Hard time in a federal prison. But no one promised you any kind of leniency for what you say here today?

COAKLEY
Objection. Witness has already answered.

OSTERMAN
Sustained. Get to the point.

VELTMANN
(Lamar has turned away again)
Look at me, Lamar.
(Lamar looks)
Hard to look, isn't it?

LAMAR
No, sir.

Veltmann slowly steps away so that now Lamar and James are looking at each other. This time, Lamar does not look away; it is as though he cannot.

VELTMANN
Would be hard for me ... looking at the man I betrayed.

COAKLEY
Objection.

OSTERMAN
Sustained. Strike the remark.
VELTMANN
(to Lamar)
I'm giving you a chance to retract your testimony. To tell the truth about James Dawkins.

LAMAR
I told the truth.

VELTMANN
Tell me again. Tell me the truth, Lamar. Was there a conspiracy? Was James Dawkins involved in anything except his individual decision not to work? Was he, Lamar? The truth. You know what it is. You know the difference between the truth and a lie. Tell me the truth.

The courtroom is very still. Everyone waits. Lamar and James are looking at each other, oblivious to anyone else.

LAMAR
Looking at James.

JAMES
Looking back at him. And then, unexpectedly, surprisingly ... James smiles at Lamar. As if he knows what Lamar is going to say. And that he knows that he and Lamar are friends.

LAMAR AND JAMES
Lamar does not quite believe what he is seeing. And then slowly he, too, begins to smile, a reluctant smile that grows wider as he realizes with amazement and disbelief what he is about to do. He shakes his head with a kind of admiration.

LAMAR
You are a pisser, country boy. You are a real down home piece of cake. Damn it, I never thought ... I mean, I had it figured--

He sighs, shaking his head, and faces the court.

(CONTINUED)
LAMAR
Nothing I said was the truth.

COAKLEY
(instantly)
Objection!

LAMAR
(indicates James)
He wouldn't know a conspiracy if it reached up and bit him on the ass. He's a believer. James even believes in the Navy. He believes things are going to get better. I mean, this boy is simple.

(shakes his head)
I made a deal, that's all. Looking for a softer rap. Nothing to it, right? I didn't know I had to look at the son of a bitch.

(bitterly, to James)
You sure don't fight fair, do you?

James just smiles fondly at him. Coakley motions to a guard.

COAKLEY
Get him out of here.

The guard takes Lamar's arm and leads him away. James watches him go. His smile slowly fades.

INT. THE COURTROOM - DAY

Coakley is finishing his summation before the judges

COAKLEY
Collective insubordination, collective disobedience of lawful orders of a superior officer, is mutiny. We have presented evidence that this mutiny was the result of a deliberate conspiracy. Granted, these men were afraid. There had been a terrible explosion. Many of their friends had been killed. But we are also in the midst of a terrible war. There was an ammunition ship to be loaded. Fear is no excuse. What kind of discipline, what kind of morale would we have if men in the United States Navy could refuse to obey an order and then get off on the grounds of fear?
CLOSE ON VELTMANN

The ANGLE WIDENING as he is seen in his summation.

VELTMANN
The legal definition of mutiny is a concerted effort to usurp, subvert or override military authority. None of that is present here. These men obeyed all orders except those to load ammunition. And even there, no direct orders to load ammunition were ever given. And even if they were issued, refusal to obey an order does not constitute mutiny. It simply does not. There was a work stoppage ... a spontaneous refusal to work on the part of young men paralyzed by fear. There was no deliberate conspiracy to usurp, subvert or override military authority. Was there talk? Of course there was.

130 INT. A SMALL CELL - DAY

Lamar is in it alone. He stands looking out the small barred window at the exercise yard. The prisoners are playing baseball.

VELTMANN

(voice over)
What could be more natural than for these men to talk about what had happened - and even what they were afraid might happen again. They had been promised an emergency furlough. White sailors got it - they didn't. Might they have been resentful and expressed that resentment? Would you have, gentlemen, in their place?

Lamar turns away from the game and lies down on his bunk, staring up at the ceiling.

VELTMANN

(voice over)
The prosecution claims that fear is no excuse. But this kind of fear ... when an explosion has shaken your world and wiped out the lives of your fellow workers without warning ... when you see them picked up in baskets and pieces - an arm, (MORE)
VELTMANN (cont'd)
a leg or a head and shoulder - fear is the logical result of such an experience.

131 INT. THE COURTROOM - DAY
Veltmann still speaking.

VELTMANN
An uncontrollable fear, a fear actually that controls you, your actions, and influences your normal reasoning beyond your ability to handle it.

He turns to point to the accused sitting in the back.

VELTMANN
Those men are not guilty. Not guilty of conspiracy, not guilty of mutiny, not even guilty of disobeying a direct order. If they are guilty of anything, they are guilty of being human.

JAMES
sitting among the men.

VELTMANN
(voice over)
Why this haste? Why this need to find conspiracy? There was an explosion. Three hundred men were killed. We still do not know how it happened, but someone, somewhere, made this terrible explosion happen.

VELTMANN
finishing.

VELTMANN
Are we so anxious to find scapegoats that we put fifty innocent men on trial with evidence that is tainted, coerced or simply unbelievable? I love my country, gentlemen, and I am very proud of its Navy. But this is not the Navy I am proud of. Thank you.

(CONTINUED)
He sits. The courtroom is absolutely still.

INT. THE HOLDING CELL - DAY

The men waiting for the verdict. The older man silently plays his three-card monte game, mostly for himself. Nobody bets. They are nervous. Most are fatalistic.

SLIPP
They gonna find us guilty, you'll see. You don't get away with nothing in the Navy. Don't matter they find you innocent, you still do some time.

ANOTHER SAILOR
How you do time when you innocent? That don't make sense.

SLIPP
Don't gotta make sense, it's the Navy.

JAMES
It ain't over.

(they look at him)

Whatever happens, it ain't over.

THIRD SAILOR
It's over for us.

JAMES
Maybe. But it ain't over.

The guard opens the cell door.

GUARD
Come and get it.

SLIPP
(protesting)
They ain't been out for more'n an hour.

GUARD
Eighty minutes.

ANOTHER SAILOR
We been on trial for a month and they only took eighty minutes?

THIRD SAILOR
(sarcastic)
Yeah. About a minute apiece. What took them so long?
They file out.

INT. THE COURTROOM - DAY

The men all seated. Veltmann and Coakley at their tables. Osterman clears his throat and consults a list before him.

OSTERMAN
Samuel Slipp.
(Slipp stands)
The court sentences you to be reduced to the rating of apprentice seaman, to be confined for a period of fifteen years—
The courtroom buzzes at the severity of the sentence.

OSTERMAN
-- then to be dishonorably discharged from the United States naval service and to suffer all the accessories of said service. Jefferson Gale.

Gale stands and Osterman repeats what he has said before. The sentence is the same. Another name; the same sentence. The men are in shock.

COAKLEY
Pleased. Looks over at Veltmann with a commiserating shrug.

VELTMANN
Ignores him. Mouth set, he starts scribbling on a pad.

OSTERMAN
James Dawkins.

JAMES
stands. Osterman's voice is heard, repeating the sentence, gradually fading as the CAMERA HOLDS in silence on James.

EXT. TERMINAL ISLAND PRISON - DAY

as the gates open to admit a prison van.
EXT. THE PRISON YARD - DAY

The group of new prisoners is let out into the yard where other prisoners are sitting or walking around or exercising. In this new group are James and some of the other mutineers. They separate as they walk around curiously.

And James is suddenly jumped from behind by another prisoner, who throws him to the ground and starts yelling at him.

PRISONER
Don't you ever do that to me again! You hear! Don't you ever!

James rolls around to face the other man.

LAMAR
looking ferociously at him.

JAMES AND LAMAR
They sit on the ground, looking at each other.

LAMAR
You took me down, country boy. Softened me up and I went right on down.

JAMES
(shakes his head)
Lifted your own self up, Lamar.

LAMAR
Took advantage, that's what you did.

JAMES
You the one said everybody's got a conscience.

LAMAR
Well, I didn't mean me.

James reaches out a hand to get up. Lamar takes it. They look at each other for a moment, then start helping each other up.

The FRAME FREEZES.
CONTINUED:

NARRATOR
Thurgood Marshall's appeal was denied. But Eleanor Roosevelt lobbied for clemency and the sentence was reduced from fifteen years to three. All fifty men were dishonorably discharged. Recently, United States Congressmen petitioned the Navy for reconsideration of the case. After reviewing the Port Chicago trial, the Navy claimed the sentences were fair.

FADE OUT:

THE END